With Juliet in England

Grace S. Richmond

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Second Violin
The Indifference of Juliet
Also many short stories for children

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IULIET

With Juliet in England

By GRACE S. RICHMOND

Author of
"The Indifference of Juliet," "The Second Violin," etc.

With Illustrations By
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER I

TO TAKE LEAVE

"TEN minutes more," said Anthony Robeson, meeting his wife's eyes with a smile, in a gallant attempt to look as if it didn't really matter. "That was the call ashore."

His grip upon the hand of Tony Junior tightened; the warm little fist of his eight-year-old son had never seemed so untransferable a possession. He looked down into the big brown eyes gazing back at him. Then he turned to study a pair of heavenly blue ones with curling baby lashes, nonchalantly regarding the sea of faces on the pier below, as Annette Robeson, aged four, took her last look at her native land from the rail where she was being firmly held by Dr. Roger Barnes. Finally his glance returned to his wife and rested there. He drew her a pace aside from the group.

"You're doing bravely," he said. "But I see now why you would wear that veil. It's thin, and it's most becoming, but its real purpose—Ah—did I do the trick? I didn't mean to, dear. The Lord knows I'm inclined to wish for the first time in my life that men wore veils!"

That brought Juliet Robeson's ready smile to shine through the mist which had blurred her vision. With a resolute touch of her handkerchief she made things clear again.

"It takes just a little bit more courage than I thought it would," she answered, not daring quite to meet her husband's eyes. "It seems all at once as if I were such a deserter, going off with the children—and all."

"Just put that out of your head now, for good. You're supposed to be going with Rachel to put her on her feet again, but you need the voyage and the change quite as much. Roger and I can 'bach' it together quite contentedly, knowing what blooming people we shall see when we come over."

"Tony—promise me you won't let that be later than July!"

"September, dear. That's only five months. Put it that way, anyhow, and then if I should find that I could get over in August—well, it would be like a sentence shortened for good behaviour—so much clear gain. What! No, no—I didn't mean to say it that way. If you knew what plans we fellows have for living a gay and care-free life in our wives' absence——"

Something in her face stopped him, and with a smile he bent and whispered in her ear. Jokes

of that sort were not common on Anthony Robeson's lips, and never, it occurred to him, would they be less consolatory than now.

Roger Barnes set little Annette down upon the deck, gave her into the charge of her nurse, and turned to a slender figure beside him. "Rachel," he said, with both his wife's hands in his, "the minute you're out of sight of the pier I want you to go below and get into your ship things. Then come up on deck, let your friends tuck you up in your chair—I've seen that it's in the snuggest place on the boat—and stay there till you touch shore on the other side. If that doesn't start a typhoid convalescent on the road to vigour, nothing will."

"May I just go below to sleep?" asked Mrs. Barnes, smiling at him.

"To sleep—perchance to dream?—Ay, if you'll dream of your husband. You look like such stuff as dreams are made of, sure enough. I want to hear that that pale face is promptly getting back its colour, and that my wife's low-necked frocks are again possible. But don't wear them till I come!"

"I won't—with two girls in the party. Which shall I chaperon?"

Barnes turned to look, following the direction of his wife's glance. Ten feet away stood the two young persons she had mentioned, taking leave

of their friends. The doctor observed them critically.

"They wear their rue with a difference, don't they?" he remarked.

"I shall like them both, I am sure," said Mrs. Barnes, her fine eyes travelling from the figure in brown to the one in navy blue—trim figures, both: attractive faces, both—with the difference. Miss Agnes Gilbert was saying good-bye to some twelve or fifteen people, her hands full of flowers, her manner the perfection of sophisticated charm. She seemed altogether the typical young woman who goes to sea, her departure regretted by everybody, her friends vying with one another to show her attention. Miss Diantha Brown, on the other hand, was attended solely by a young man, and he looked not at all the same sort of young man as those whom Miss Gilbert numbered at her elbow. At the moment that Doctor and Mrs. Barnes turned his way he was pulling a brown slouch-hat with a cord about its crown well down over a pair of very intent gray eyes, with which he was watching the face of Miss Diantha Brown to the exclusion of all other faces of the many which surrounded him. A big ulster of rough cloth fell apart over a suit of military khaki, brown leggings gripping a powerful pair of calves. One sinewy tanned hand rested on the rail at his

side, the other, in a heavy gauntlet glove, held a small bunch of violets.

"Picturesque sort of chap, isn't he?" commented the doctor. "Somehow I like the look of that wide-awake among so much stiff head-gear. Seems to be doing his best to make Miss Brown forget the absence of a crowd to see her off like that which is attending Miss Gilbert. Which shall you chaperon? That's hard saying, for Nan Gilbert always attracts attention, and knowing nothing of Miss Brown I can only judge of her powers by the expression on the face of that one young man. I should fancy that chaperoning Miss Gilbert will be rather the easier job of the two. I'll advise you to leave the new girl to Juliet."

Over by the rail Diantha Brown, having heard the summons for all visitors to leave the ship, was saying rather hastily: "It was awfully good of you, Lin Webb, to come eight hundred miles to see me off. It makes me feel guilty to think of you getting back on the train, when you've only been off it an hour—and no sleep."

"A soldier boy learns to sleep standing up, like his horse, you know," responded Lieutenant Lincoln Webb, remaining stationary by the rail, in spite of the fact that his companion had moved slightly, as if she expected him to make his start

toward joining the crowd pressing over the gangway, some distance off.

"If it hadn't been for you I'd have had absolutely nobody to say good-bye to me."

"Naturally not—since your old friends are all on the other side of the United States. You'll find plenty of steamer letters, I'll wager."

"Oh, I hope so!—Do you suppose, though, Aunt Henrietta and Uncle Ephraim will ever think of sending steamer letters? They never did such a thing in all their dear old lives."

"They never had their foster-child sailing for England before."

"It seems so queer I'm doing that. I just can't get used to it." With a little shake of the head, Diantha gave one sweeping glance over the ship.

"You'll get used to it, just as you have to wearing clothes like those. I could hardly believe it was you, at first, in that rig."

The girl frowned and laughed. "Lin!—don't you like it? If you don't you're a queer boy. I'm all right, I know, for Miss Gilbert and Mrs. Robeson chose everything I have on, and I'm sure I look to myself just like all the girls here."

"You do—with a difference," answered Webb, unconsciously echoing Doctor Barnes's qualification. "You're great, and it's just what you ought to be to sail with people like Mrs. Robeson

and Mrs. Barnes. It just seems strange to me, that's all. You see, the last I saw of you, before you came East, you were wearing a loose corn-coloured shirt with a rolling collar and a brown scarf that floated in the wind when you rode Starlight across the plains with me. It's not right easy to get used to seeing you in tailorish clothes like those. And that rakish little hat, with a speckled veil across your small brown nose——"

"Brown!—Lin Webb—when I've been putting on cold cream ever since I came East——"

"I knew you had. I wish you wouldn't. I like the brownness best. I——"

"I don't want to hurry you, but almost everybody is off. Doctor Barnes and Mr. Robeson are 'way over there by the gangplank. If you should get left——"

"I wish I could."

She took a step in the direction she had indicated, without making any response to this remark, if indeed she heard it. Webb followed reluctantly, his eyes turning from the figure in front of him to scan for a moment a group of a half-dozen young men who stood together by the rail, evidently not leaving the ship, for one of them was exchanging a fire of badinage with a party of people on the pier below.

"Dina," said he, over the small brown shoulder

in front, "you're going to meet a lot of folks, first and last, aren't you?"

"Why, of course. That's part of it, isn't it?"

"Yes, I expect that's part of it—a big part. It's fine for you, and I'm as glad as it's in a selfish fellow like me to be. You've met only Western men so far. I want you to meet Eastern men, and Southern men, and Englishmen, and French, and all the rest—that is—you're going to meet 'em, you know, so I might as well wish it." There was a wistful sort of twinkle in his eyes. "But, Dina—promise me one thing."

He bent lower, and the girl turned partly toward him, held by something very earnest which had come into his tone.

"Don't trust any man, no matter how smooth he seems, if he has a shifty eye, or an eye that says one thing while his mouth says another. And—when you don't know what to do with a fellow, turn him over to Mrs. Robeson. She'll know."

Diantha wheeled completely around, surprised by this last admonition. An hour earlier Lieutenant Webb had been presented to Mrs. Robeson, and had held some five minutes' conversation with her before she had cleverly turned him over to the girl he had come eight hundred miles to see off.

"She certainly will," admitted Diantha. "But

I don't see how you knew. She looks like a girl herself, for all Tony Junior is eight years old."

"She looks like a girl, but she's a woman, and a thoroughly sane one, if I'm any judge. Those eyes of hers sized me up in thirty seconds—and Mrs. Barnes finished the job. I felt as if I'd been presented with a major's commission when Mrs. Robeson passed me back to you with that smile of hers. It meant—oh, don't look like that—I'm not bragging—it meant simply that she knew she could trust me. And—whatever Lin Webb may or may not be, Dina girl, he can be trusted. He'll be a true-blue comrade to you, the same as he's always been, no matter how far away you are or how many fellows on the other side may be jollying you into forgetting your countryman."

"Don't I know that?" demanded Diantha Brown, holding out an impulsive hand. They were close by the gangway now—almost the last lingerer had passed its narrow stretch. The official in charge gave the sturdy young man in the soldier's garb a look intended to hasten his steps. Webb looked down at the small hand in its smart new glove. Then his eyes met Diantha's in one disappointed glance of protest.

"You aren't going to give me your hand for good-bye with a glove on? Lord—what have they done to you out East here in six short months?"

Blushing hotly, Diantha pulled off the glove, aware that they were not unobserved. "I truly forgot," she whispered quickly. "I'm so excited over sailing I don't know what I'm doing."

Her hand met a long, hard pressure, and as it was released a small bunch of violets was slipped into it and crushed there. "I hadn't a minute to get to any flower place," whispered the cavalryman, "and just had to buy these wilted things of a girl on the corner. Chuck 'em overboard if you like, but don't forget what you know they mean. Good-bye, little comrade—God bless you!"

Close by the rail, her eyes smarting with the hot tears she tried in vain to keep back, Diantha watched the broad shoulders in the brown uniform make their way into the crowd and turn about to face the ship. Afterward she never could remember just how the interval passed before the space between steamer and pier began almost imperceptibly to widen, and the mass of upturned faces below her became half-obscured by the hundreds of fluttering handkerchiefs. But that which she could always distinctly recall was the look on one sunburned face as a military slouch hat was swung round and round a bare head towering above all the other heads around. It was the look of the comrade who goes back to fight his battles alone, but who fights to win.

It was at another gangway, the last to be removed, that Anthony Robeson and Roger Barnes were taking leave of their own. Hugging his small son until the face of Tony Junior was red with the squeeze—which the boy violently returned; kissing the round little flower-like face of his tiny girl over and over as if he could not let her go; Robeson showed more plainly than he meant to do how much of a sacrifice he was making. When he turned to his wife he saw that he had betrayed himself.

"I'm an emotional idiot," he whispered penitently. "It's all your fault, Julie, for having children like these. I could send off some people's youngsters without turning a hair!"

"Doubtless," she answered, smiling rather tremulously. "And it's equally true that we could sail away from some children's fathers without minding it a particle."

They laughed together, clung to each other a moment, and made the parting as brief and bright as they could. Families separate every day for longer periods of absence than the one which lay before these people, without a tenth of the pull on their heart-strings. In these days domestic affection of the sort which makes partings sorrowful is not much exploited, but there can be no question that it exists, and that it is very real. Anthony

Robeson, looking back at the great ship, from which wife and children were waving good-byes meant every one for him, was deeply aware of what the years had brought him, and of how infinitely dear it was.

"God of the mighty waters protect them!" murmured Roger Barnes, at his ear. "I've crossed the old pond a score of times and never thought of fear, in storms the worst ever known. But now, with my convalescent Rachel aboard, and your priceless family, I feel like a boy who's launched a toy ship just above Niagara Falls! Odd, isn't it?"

"Not odd at all," murmured his friend, his eyes straining to catch the last blurred outlines of Juliet's figure, and keeping up the parting salute until they were absolutely lost to view. "The odd thing is that we ever sent them off at all. You're a mighty good fellow, Roger Barnes, but if you think that seeing your boot-heels above your head in my den when I come home at night is going to make up to me for the sight of Ann and Tony scampering downstairs to hug my head off, you're tremendously mistaken! There's no doubt about it—my bachelor days ended with a crash ten years ago and—de'il take 'em—I don't like the prospect of having 'em back!"

But he had sent off his party successfully

nevertheless. All the way across the ocean, and during the months that followed, Juliet Robeson had but to close her eyes to see the beloved stalwart figure on the pier below her, the fine rugged face smiling and smiling up at her, as Anthony swung his hat lustily, his arm never relaxing until she could see him no more. The mingled sweetness and strength in Anthony's smile had long been her delight, and, remembering how it had lit his face to the very last, she blessed him in her heart, and resolved afresh to make her absence tell in recruiting her for fresh and happy home-making when she should return.

CHAPTER II

MOSTLY ON DECK

I DO think going ashore is just as disagreeable as sailing away in the beginning. Each time you have to leave people you don't want to leave at all. Besides—I can't begin to get the things into my trunk that came out of it!"

Diantha Brown sat upon the edge of her berth, trying to wedge into the tray of her steamer-trunk half a dozen parcels for which there was quite evidently no room at all. Miss Agnes Gilbert, standing in the only corner of the state-room unencumbered by Diantha's operations, was packing a leather bag, laying each article into a place which seemed precisely intended for it. Diantha looked over at her enviously.

"It never seems to bother you a bit," she observed, rather viciously ramming a box into a smaller space than was practicable by crushing in the end. "You seem to have lots more clothes and ivory-backed brushes and all that sort of thing than I have, yet you stuff your frocks all out with tissue-paper and little orris bags,

and still you have plenty of room. I just don't understand it."

Agnes Gilbert laughed. "The truth of the matter is," she replied, "that I really haven't more with me than will go quite comfortably into my trunk and this bag. I spent a week thinking it out. Indeed I haven't any clothes with me, to speak of. It's not a bit of fun to be packing all the time. It's when I start home that I shall have a bad time packing. Then I shall probably buy a wicker hamper, or a tin box, or something of that sort. I don't like having my clothes squeezed and wrinkled."

"Neither do I," declared Diantha, frowning at a mass of flowered organdie which lay in the upper berth. "That thing isn't fit to wear to the Captain's dinner. He's such a dear, too! And yours is nice as nice—not a wrinkle nor a mussed place. I don't see how you manage it!"

"I brought an evening frock that wouldn't muss —picked out the material on purpose. I can almost roll it into a ball without wrinkling it—and it takes up so little room it's a marvel. Organdie is lovely, but it does rumple frightfully. It's too bad, but our stewardess will get it pressed out for you, you know."

"Oh, will she?" Diantha promptly pressed a button. "I do remember now Mrs. Barnes

wanted me not to get an organdie, but I would have it, I loved it so. Browns and yellows are about all the colours I can wear, you know, and these beauteous yellow poppies simply broke me all up!—I mean—" she corrected herself hastily—"made me want them awfully. I really don't mean to make you wince like that, Miss Gilbert, if I am an uncivilised wild Westerner."

"Did I wince?" Agnes smiled. "If I did, it's because the prettier lips are the less I like to see frogs and toads jumping out."

"If I only knew how to put things beautifully like that!" sighed Diantha. "But perhaps six months' association with such people as you and Mrs. Robeson and Mrs. Barnes—a college girl, and a dear woman, and a beautiful lady, all of them with the loveliest manners I ever saw—will teach me something. Anyhow, I don't mean to disgrace you all, since Mrs. Robeson was so heavenly kind as to invite me. Wasn't it wonderful of her to do it, when she didn't know a thing about me except that Uncle Ephraim wanted me to go to England with nice people?"

"She knew much more than that, my dear. Your Uncle Ephraim's being her father's old chum in their boy days gave her a warm interest in you. Then Mr. Marcy's having just renewed the acquaintance in that Western visit did a good deal

for you. If you could know the nice things Mr. Marcy told Mrs. Robeson about you when he came back, and the way he described your uncle's anxiety to have you travel with somebody just like her, you would understand how ready she was to take you on trust."

"Didn't I just have some fine rides with Mr. Marcy, though, over the plains?" laughed Diantha, reminiscently, sitting on her trunk in a vain effort to make the lid close. "I gave him Commodore—the stateliest beast, just Mr. Marcy's style, and altogether too sober for me. Starlight used to dance all around him and fairly take his breath away—Mr. Marcy's I mean. Oh, goodness!—I can't shut this thing! I'm going up on deck to see what Patsy's doing."

"To see what—*who*—is doing?"

"Mr. Timothy Fitzpatrick, of Magdalen College, Oxford University, England, if you please. Home in Dublin—lately visiting in 'the States,' and now returning to his arduous studies. He's not an undergraduate, he's working for some extra degree he vows he doesn't want."

"You've reached the 'Patsy' stage of his acquaintance, have you?" inquired Miss Gilbert, with an amused glance.

"'Dade an' Oi have, thin," Diantha responded gaily, pinning a brown steamer cap upon her

chestnut curls, and pulling on a heavy brown coat. She tied a scarlet scarf about her neck, picked up a brown-plaid steamer-rug with a scarlet lining, rummaged out a pair of brown-silk mittens, and with a nod and smile was off. She left behind her the half-shut trunk nonchalantly occupying the middle of the floor, and various articles belonging to her dressing-case scattered about the small room.

"With all her faults," said Agnes Gilbert to herself, pushing a pair of Diantha's small kid slippers into a corner where they could not obstruct the passage of the steamer-trunk to its return under the berth, an office which she now good-humouredly performed for her room-mate, "she's a fascinating child, and one can hardly blame 'Patsy' and the rest for following her about like dogs. It's quite a different sort of attention from that which I seem to inspire, but one can't be surprised that she's a trifle exhilarated by it."

When, a few minutes later, Agnes herself reached the deck and her own snug corner by her friends, she was not surprised to find the steamer-chair belonging to Diantha, next her own, occupied only by the brown rug with the scarlet lining. Near by, in the full April sunshine, Mrs. Barnes lay in her chair, warmly wrapped, her delicate cheeks, rounder than they had been six days before,

colouring satisfactorily under the warm rays and the light breeze which played steadily across them.

"How much better you are!" declared Agnes, settling herself with rug and book at her friend's elbow. "No wonder Doctor Barnes insisted so firmly on a sea voyage after typhoid. Another week of gaining, and you will look like your wonderful self again. Did Diantha tuck you up before she went off?"

"Very nicely, with all sorts of small pats and pushes. Yes, I'm gaining fast, I think, though as yet I don't feel much inclination toward the attempts at walking advised. The Captain gave me his arm when I came up and was very nice, but one turn was all I could do. Diantha must have walked miles. Every time I open my eyes she and Mr. Fitzpatrick are just coming around that corner at a great pace. How blooming the child is!"

As Mrs. Barnes spoke the two young people in question swung into view, measuring off the promenade with vigorous steps. As they blew breezily by the young man called out joyously:

"It's certainly the fine air for a tramp. Sixteen laps we've made now, and still she's not tired. And I thought American girls couldn't walk!"

"It's plain you never met a Western girl before," Diantha explained, as they marched on, her brown

mitten resting lightly on the gray tweed arm whose sturdy balance kept her from minding the slight rolling of the deck beneath her feet. "Eastern girls are no walkers, nor Southern ones—not a bit. But Northern girls—clear up, where it's cold, I mean—and Western ones—can keep up with any Irishman who ever set them the pace."

"It's a braggart you are, Miss Brown, and I'll lead you the weary long walk to pay for that—or my name's not Timmy Fitzpatrick. You'll be that tired you'll sink into your chair at the Captain's dinner and have no talk for that foggy-brained gentleman from Melbourne that has the luck to sit at your side."

"He doesn't know he's lucky."

"That's because of that same foggy brain. If the Irishman from Dublin were just at your other elbow, now—But seeing he has the ill-fate to be half-way across the saloon from you, will you make it up to him by inclining that small ear toward a humble request?"

"Perhaps!"

"Well, then, will you—Here comes that noodle of an Australian! Keep up the pace, Miss Brown, please—don't slacken!—We're doing time, Mr. Wykeham," he called out boldly, with a tightening arm to hold Diantha's hand from slipping away, as the approaching young man gave evidence of

intention to join the pair. "Miss Gilbert is holding the watch. We'll be looking you up when we've finished."

"Oh, what a fib," breathed Diantha, as she was swept on.

"A man has to lie to hold his own against those fellows. They've the insolent way with them of simply appropriating a girl and holding the fort against all comers. They put a heavy foot on the hem of her frock, you know, when they sit beside her, to keep her from getting away. They never know when they've bored her to death—the only thing they know is when they're by way of being bored themselves. Sure, then they're fast enough to be off!"

Diantha glanced up at the piquant profile of Mr. Timothy Fitzpatrick, and it instantly became a full face, turned toward her—brilliant hazel eyes, whimsical mouth, and impudent chin. He looked the type of the handsome young Irishman, to whose air of audacity the thick thatch of wavy auburn hair added the consistent touch. She admitted to herself that there was not much chance of a girl's being bored in his society, and listened with interest as he proceeded to elucidate to her his opinion of the best way to spend one's last evening on board ship, and to prefer his request that she allow him to demonstrate the same.

Two hours later, Mrs. Anthony Robeson, dressing for the Captain's dinner, found her state-room invaded by a rush of gauzy skirts in tones of cream and yellow, and herself called upon for much advice. Her charge was in a flutter of excitement over a proposition made by Mr. Timothy Fitzpatrick, which, the lady was informed, was presently to be referred to her.

"Of course," said Diantha, sitting upon the edge of Mrs. Robeson's berth and swinging a shapely foot in a white slipper as she talked, "I wouldn't for the world even hint at any change in your plans, because I know they're simply the best ever. But Mr. Fitzpatrick is so persistent—in an awfully kind way, you know—I thought I'd just prepare you for what he wants to say."

"He wants us to come to Oxford, I suppose?" said Mrs. Robeson, smiling. "Didn't you know we meant to do that?"

"In time for Commencement—Commemoration, I mean? Yes, I did. But you see, he keeps insisting that Eights' Week is the great time to be there."

"That comes earlier, I believe?"

"Yes—the seventeenth of May." Diantha was very prompt with the exact date. "He says—you see—the point is—Oxford's so crowded in Eights' Week you have to engage rooms long

beforehand, and that's what he wants to do for you, if you'll let him. He knows some lovely ones. And if we come he'll have us on his college barge, and give us tea in his rooms, and take us out in punts, and do lots of things——"

"In short, quite monopolise you. Yes, I think I know the sort of time Mr. Fitzpatrick would give you."

"And of course Miss Gilbert, and you and Mrs. Barnes, would have it all, too—just as much or more than I. Mr. Fitzpatrick admires Miss Gilbert immensely, and he thinks Mrs. Barnes the most beautiful thing in the world—as of course she is. And you——"

"Of course he has a charming bit of blarney for me," laughed her friendly chaperon, trying with a hand-glass to get a glimpse of the back of her own pretty head in the quite inadequate mirror provided by the steamship company for its feminine patrons.

"He meant it, I know. He said if he didn't know to the contrary he should take you for a girl who had been in society for just two or three years, so that you had acquired that lovely art of putting everybody at his best with you. He said——"

"Spare me!" Mrs. Robeson laid a warm white hand upon Diantha's eager mouth, smiling

at her. "Mr. Fitzpatrick is a very artful young man, and I am quite prepared to listen amiably to his plan, provided six weeks on the Devon shore proves to be all Mrs. Barnes needs. It's possible, you know, that you will fall so in love with that exquisite country you won't want to leave it, even for London town, to say nothing of dingy old Oxford."

"I know I'm prone to fall in love," admitted Diantha, stooping to arrange a fold of her companion's skirts, and remaining on her knees a moment to look up at the fair face above her with eyes which gave point to her words. Mrs. Robeson laughed, and patted the dark young head, returning the girl's affectionate gaze with a glance which made Diantha's heart grow warmer still. The older woman was quite used to being devotedly liked by everybody, but there was something in this frank Westerner's ready love for her which touched her. She felt, too, that it behooved her to bind her young charge to her with as close ties as she might, anticipating that to steer her straight through the experiences awaiting her might call for those friendly counsels which are best received when mixed with affection.

"My, but I'm proud to belong to this party!" whispered Diantha Brown, by and by, to Agnes Gilbert, as they followed the two older ladies

"Who's old enough to die?" urged a low voice at Diantha's elbow.

toward the dining-saloon. "Aren't they both too lovely? Mrs. Barnes is the beauty, of course—and she's simply perfect in that filmy pale gray. But Mrs. Robeson just reminds me of a rose, she's so sweet and jolly—she simply makes you want to hug her. No wonder her children eat her up when they get a chance—I'd like to myself."

"We're to be changed about a bit at our table to-night," murmured Agnes. "Mrs. Barnes is going to sit by the Captain. Did you ever see such gallantry as he's shown her all the way across? And you're to be between Mr. Wykeham and Mr. Lockwood."

Diantha made a face. "That stupid Melbourne man, and that polished old bachelor—I don't know which I dread most. See here—do you know what I think? I think Mr. Lockwood is an old flame of Mrs. Barnes——"

"Hush," whispered Agnes, a hint of colour rising in her cheek. "He isn't old at all—not over forty."

"Forty! Goodness! That's old enough to die!"

"Who's old enough to die?" urged a low voice at Diantha's elbow. "Sure, I hope it's not my advanced age you're minding. I do my best to seem a boy again when I'm with you."

"You succeed wonderfully," returned Diantha, gazing with interest at Fitzpatrick's more than usually festive evening attire.

"You'll not forget your promise?"

"What promise?"

"The cruel heart of the lady! I've found just the jolly nook to be watching the moon come up, while the rest of the people are still exchanging perfunctory pleasantries inside. Remember, now, you'll please not keep on that foolishness of a frock, and think to deceive me with a long coat over it——"

"Good-bye, I'm going in—" and Diantha trailed away in the wake of her friends, rather enjoying the attention they were attracting, and holding her dainty head high to make up for the trying fact that she was not the tallest member of the little party.

Two hours later, having grown as weary as Fitzpatrick had predicted she would, of the long dinner and her alternate experiences with the elegant Mr. Lockwood on her right and the heavy Mr. Wykeham on her left, Diantha seized the first opportunity to steal away from the flowers and flags and favours of the "Captain's dinner," and to hurry up to her state-room. Here, in five minutes, she had flung off her society attire, replaced the white slippers with the stout little boots adapted to deck promenades, and got into the warm clothing suited to the cool April evening she was to find outside. With expectant eyes she

looked into her mirror as she pinned her cap in place, to see a dark-eyed, engaging face picturesquely reflected there, and to smile at her own image in sheer joy of being young and having an engagement with a delightful young Irishman, to watch the April moon come up, from the deck of an Atlantic liner.

"Oh, Lin Webb," thought Diantha, as she made her way to the promenade-deck, "what would you think of your comrade if you knew she hasn't remembered you once to-night until this minute! Faithful old boy—I know you're thinking of her. But she's not engaged to you, you know, so she isn't really a traitor to be meeting Patsy up here in——"

"True for you!" exclaimed a rich voice by the companion-way. "Only a half-hour late, but that's doing passing well, for a girl at her first farewell ship-dinner. Tell me—did the Australian have his foot on your gown that you lingered in his coruscations so long?"

"Both feet."

"As long as a man has the use of his eyes—and his tongue—I see no need of brute force," observed Timothy Fitzpatrick, with his customary complaisance. "Come this way, Miss Brown—I'm taking you to a spot you've not found out all the way over. Along here—up this bit of a ladder—

there now! Isn't this the snug nook to be saying good-bye in—till Eights' Week?"

"What an experienced person you must be in finding places to say good-bye to girls in! Or do you always choose the same spot?"

Fitzpatrick, drawing the brown and scarlet rug protectingly about his companion, as he settled her among cushions purloined from she knew not whose quarters, paused and regarded her reproachfully in the dim light.

"Sure, it's the American girl," said he, "that keeps a little bucket of ice-water at hand to fling over the lad at her side when he shows the first sign of warmth. Yet, for all that, I suppose it's in the kindness of her heart, to keep him from getting into——"

"Hot water," suggested Diantha, promptly. "Yet, that's it, exactly. I'm tucked in quite enough, thank you. Now sit down and compose yourself, and tell me how many girls you have escorted into places like this."

"Yourself," said he solemnly, "is the first!"

Her heartily appreciative laugh rippled off over the deserted hurricane-deck, joined, after the first explosion, by his, equally hearty in its frank tale-telling.

CHAPTER III

FROM DIANTHA'S JOURNAL

Duke of Cornwall Hotel,
Plymouth, England.

JUST as the band finished playing Luther's Hymn this morning, at seven o'clock, I heard a shriek from Miss Gilbert, and opened my eyes to see her fairly hanging out of our port-hole. I thought she'd seen a whale, and bounced up, but it turned out to be the Scilly Isles—our first sight of land. We gazed and gazed at them, as if we would eat them up, though they were nothing at all to look at except an irregular line of rocks and a gray light-house.

I spent the next two hours trying to get all the left-overs into my trunk, and finally had to give it up and pack them into the fruit-hamper Miss Gilbert had sent her when she sailed. I don't know where in the world I acquired so much stuff I didn't have in the beginning, except that Patsy and the rest kept presenting me with books and pictures and ship "souvenirs," and our bedroom steward, who is a peach and plays in the band besides, gave me a beautiful little model of a full-rigged schooner, which he carved all himself.

After I had finally accomplished my packing, and locked everything up, I lost the keys, and had an awful hunt for them, and nearly drove our steward and stewardess crazy. I thought they might be in a pile of discarded papers I had left after packing and asked the steward about them. He looked wild and made a despairing gesture with both hands toward the port-hole. "*Alle—aus!*" he cried, and I thought surely he had thrown my keys away too. But they turned up in my

pocket-book after all, and I had to fee everybody for nothing at all but assisting at my scare!

Then I put on my land clothes and went up on deck, slightly exhausted by the packing and my emotions, and found all my party standing in a group at the rail, devouring the scenery which I had been missing. Patsy was at Mrs. Robeson's elbow, talking Oxford to her, as I knew by her amused little friendly smile and by his warm face. He kept right at it for a long time, leaving me to Mr. Wykeham, whom I simply can't endure and hope devoutly I'll never meet again. Anything more boresome than Mr. Wykeham I can't conceive. Everything I say he just stares and answers "*Aouw.*" If I couldn't say anything more appreciative in reply to a girl's observations, I'd say "*Oh*" and not work in all the vowels of the alphabet.

Mr. Louis Lockwood was looking after Mrs. Barnes. He devotés himself to her all she will let him—which isn't very much, because she turns him over to Miss Gilbert whenever she can do it naturally. She is so beautiful, and so sort of touchingly sweet just now in her convalescence, I feel myself I want to be doing things for her all the time, and I simply long to pat those soft black masses of her hair. She says half of it has come out since the fever, but it's still so thick that it doesn't show. Her eyes are the most fascinating ones I ever saw, and when she lies in her steamer-chair and looks up from under those lashes at you, you simply lose your head. I'm sure Mr. Lockwood wanted to marry her once, and that's why he treats her in such a reverent sort of way now. Yet he seems to enjoy Agnes very much—who wouldn't? I asked Mrs. Robeson if she knew he was to be on this ship, and her mouth took an odd little set as she said, "Not at all. Mr. Lockwood crosses very frequently, and was as surprised to find our names on the passenger-list as we to find his."

The shores were worth watching every minute all the way into Plymouth harbour. Mrs. Robeson says I am lucky to land here, for nowhere would I see a more picturesque harbour,

without one unsightly spot anywhere. In the April sunlight it was like some fine painting, all colour and harmony. I tried hard to imagine things out of history, like Sir Francis Drake, playing bowls up there on the Hoe, when the word came that the ships of the Spanish Armada were in sight. "Bedad, thin, we'll finish the game, and thin we'll go and lick the Shpaniards out of their boots," said he. At least that's what Patsy says he said. For all Patsy's an Oxford man, his speech has a decided hint of brogue, which I think he doesn't try in the least to overcome and often exaggerates, in fun, just out of pure loyalty to his beloved Ireland. He didn't want to go to Oxford in the beginning—would have preferred to stay at the University of Dublin. But his mother is Scotch-English, and though, as he says, that gives him only a quarter of English blood, that quarter was enough to send him to Oxford.

Mrs. Robeson has agreed to take our party to Oxford in time for Eights' Week, so Patsy is radiant, and I'm delighted, though I pretend not to be. The fact that we are to meet again in six weeks eased off our parting decidedly, for I must admit that I should have hated to see the last of Mr. Timothy Fitzpatrick on the deck of the lighter that brought us in. He's been awfully jolly company, and has kept me from being homesick very successfully. When he left us, after seeing to all our baggage—I mean luggage—and getting us through the customs' inspection as smoothly as if he ran the whole thing himself, he put us in the cab that was to bring us up here to our hotel. He himself was taking the boat-train to London which was waiting when the ship came in. He hadn't but a minute left, for the luggage business had taken all the time, and the guard was already shutting up the doors at the front of the train. But he shook hands all around with everybody down to Baby Annette, his hat in his hand and his auburn hair—it *isn't* red—showing up touchingly in the sunshine. He saved me till the last, and then he wrung my hand as if he'd wring it off, looked me in the eyes with those gay hazel ones of his—they didn't look so gay

just at that minute—and walked off without saying a word of good-bye to me. I didn't mind, though, for his eyes said it fast enough, and added that we'd meet again.

Mr. Lockwood went on to Southampton on the big ship, which we watched from the deck of the lighter, steaming slowly away like a great black pirate-boat. I didn't hear a word about our seeing him again, but I shall not be surprised if he walks in on us somewhere, with that coolly dignified air of his.

I don't think I like it at this quiet hotel—so English that it fairly subdues even me. I go about the velvet-padded corridors and staircases holding my breath lest I make a noise, and when I speak to a chambermaid or waiter I do it in a terribly refined and calm way—quite unlike myself. The servants all thank me for telling them what I want, and when they bring it they thank me again. I've learned already what sixpences are for—they are the coin of exchange for all these "Thank you, ma'ams." The boy who runs the elevator—lift, of course, I mean—is grateful to me for letting him take me up and down. . . . But then I can understand that. Patsy was always grateful for my letting him wait on me. But the lift-boy combines his admiration of me with his affection for thrupPences, and we are good friends already.

Note. They're not "thruppences" when you write them, it seems, though when they tell you how much a thing is they say it's "thruppence" or "thrippence." I should have written "three-penny bit."

CHAPTER IV

IN SOUTH DEVON

"THE question is," said Mrs. Juliet Marcy Robeson, "whether, having had a week of it, we shall remain at this hotel, go to a boarding-house, or take furnished apartments and keep house by ourselves."

She stood by the window of her room in a small inn on the coast of South Devon, at that favourite winter resort more frequented by English people than by travelling Americans, Torquay. She was looking out, as she spoke, at the crowds passing and repassing on the promenade, and her eye was at the moment caught by an unusually vivid note of colour.

"Rachel," she called softly—for the window was open, the day being an unusually mild one for April—"come here and look at this human kaleidoscope!"

Mrs. Barnes rose languidly from the big wicker chair in which she had been sitting before a smouldering coal fire, and moved over to the window. Her friend pointed out the figure which had caught her attention, her lips in lines of

mirth. Rachel looked, smiled, and watched the figure out of sight.

"Isn't that wonderful?" murmured Juliet. "Think how you or I should feel if we should don such a flower-bed as that and venture forth. I hope I can remember it. Brocaded blue-and-white silk, cerise petticoat, lilac bonnet, and green parasol—and she must be sixty, at least. Very expensive finery, too, and a maid at her elbow. How much prettier the maid looked than the mistress!"

"It's very noticeable," said Rachel, remaining to watch the passing show for a moment, before returning to her nook by the fire, "how fond the English people are of colour and what daring combinations they make. I suppose our street clothes, all grays and browns and blues, look very dull and sober to them."

"No doubt of it. Our little touches of colour, which we think quite enough to light up a sober frock, must be mere insufficient gleams in the eyes of these gorgeous ladies. This is a very fashionable resort, too—'the Newport of England,' our faithful guide-book says. Well—to go back to the question: Shall we elect to stay here at these prices; explore some of the boarding-places which look so attractive further along the shore toward Paignton; or hunt up furnished lodgings and try our 'prentice hands at English housekeeping?"

"I suppose you are longing to do the last." Rachel smiled up at her friend, her face, still delicate with the later stages of convalescence, a sufficiently striking contrast to Juliet's warmer colouring and vivacious manner.

"I'm quite willing to board for a time if you would prefer it, for I've been keeping house nearly ten years and am supposed to be in need of a change. Still, I'm very sure I shall want to try the other plan after a while, just to show what I can do. But if you like the subdued and serious atmosphere of an English boarding-house now's your time. Your travels with Roger in other lands ought to prepare you for the very moderate inconveniences you'll have to put up with in this."

"I'm not afraid. And I really think it will be interesting to meet the various sorts of people life at such a place will throw in our way. Agnes likes it, and Diantha confessed to me she was longing for the experience of being in such a place as that pretty *pension* we passed yesterday on our drive to Cockington."

"Let me see—there were at least four young men lounging about the lawn and tennis-court, weren't there? I've no doubt Diantha would like it. But she won't find the average young Englishman quite so vulnerable as Lieutenant Webb or

Timothy Fitzpatrick. Englishmen are dreadfully afraid of what an American girl is going to do. And whatever it is, Diantha is sure to do it."

"Is she?" exclaimed a gay voice at the door, and Diantha herself, with Agnes Gilbert, came in. "What am I sure to do, dear lady? Shock the natives? Actually, from their looks, one would think there was something odd about me."

"There is." Agnes sat down, laid aside her parasol, and pulled off her gloves. "In all Torquay, there's not another girl dressed in a blouse-and-skirt suit of wood-brown pongee silk, fitting perfectly, its plaits hanging evenly above her brown-shod feet. There's not another girl wearing a hat of brown straw, trimmed with a brown scarf and a dashing brown feather—brown suede gloves on her hands, brown lights in her eyes, brown-black curly hair in a lovely low mass like that. It's small wonder they stare at her as if they couldn't possibly understand how a girl can look so radiant without so much as a posy stuck in her belt. Now I——"

"Oh, yes—one would think you looked like one of those patchwork-quilt girls, all colours of the rainbow, to hear you talk about my brown-ness. As if dark-blue isn't just as sober as——"

"I've a white blouse——"

"And a dark-blue straw hat——"

"But not trimmed in monotone like your brown one."

"No—it has that dashing little green wreath on it, with bits of scarlet flowers perking out. And a veil so smart I'd know you were an American by it way down the street. Just the same, compared with those English girls you're a nun."

"I really thought I was rather gay." Agnes laughed at Diantha's animation.

"You *are* wearing that Florentine necklace that drives me wild with envy every time I look at it—all reds and blues and greens and gold. Oh, you know how to look brilliant, just by a touch. I'm the one they stare at. Then they turn and gaze expressively at one another, and hold their heads higher than ever. As if those pancake hats they wear, that went completely out, even in the woolly West, two years ago, weren't absolutely the ugliest! And the ones that don't wear the great flopping pancakes, pinned down tight to their hair behind, wear inverted wash-basin hats—worse yet. Such pretty girls, too. I long to shout at them—'Look at Miss Agnes Gilbert—that's the way to dress!'"

"Reserve your judgment till you've sat for an hour in a certain place in Hyde Park," advised Agnes, laughing. "If you're not aching then to

take off some of the millinery you see and put it on your own arrogant young head, I shall be much surprised."

"I'm so hungry," sighed Diantha, irrelevantly. "I wish we were not going to have cauliflower for dinner. Even in this nice hotel I catch the odour as I come in the door. Is there absolutely no vegetable in England except cauliflower?"

"Cabbage," suggested Mrs. Robeson.

"Oh, yes—and kale. They all taste alike to me. Do you know—there's one awful thing that has struck me since I came—we shan't have one taste of green corn this year! Mr. Wykeham told me that on the way over. It was one of the few impressions he had of America—he had found the green corn 'jolly good.' Right he is on that proposition!" Diantha rolled up her eyes and smacked her lips.

"If we go to a boarding-house, as we are thinking of doing, we shall still have cauliflower. This is the season for cauliflower and rhubarb tarts."

"Oh, are we going to a boarding-house? I'm awfully glad! At a boarding-house they may relax a little. It's so still here in this coffee-room, I feel as if I were at a private house, just arrived, and taking dinner with the other relatives before the funeral! The waiters help out the illusion,

too. They look as if their late master, God bless 'im, 'ad been a werry fine gentleman!"

"How should you like," suggested Mrs. Robeson, "taking a cab and going with me to look up the most desirable place?"

Diantha jumped up eagerly. "Oh, I should love it. I'll be just as modest and quiet, at your elbow, as a nice little English girl, so they won't know the worst about me till it's too late to retract."

"They'll guess it," declared Miss Gilbert, teasingly, "if you so much as open your mouth."

Diantha faced about. "Do I talk such awful English?"

"Not a bit. But—you sometimes have a—vivid—way of putting things, you know."

"Slangy, is what you mean. Besides, of course, I have the Western accent. Now you people, with your beautifully Bostonian way of talking, just fit right in with the natives. Oh, well, I shall not say a word all the while Mrs. Robeson is talking rooms and terms, just look intelligent—if I can. Perhaps they'll think I'm lately out of a convent."

She followed Mrs. Robeson out into the cab, turning to wave a gay farewell at the two in the window. She was pulling on her gloves as she crossed the pavement, and one of them, long and brown, dropped as she waved. Diantha did not

see it, but a passing middle-aged gentleman of a martial aspect did, and stopped to pick it up.

"She'll get away before she notices or he catches up," said Agnes at the window.

But she did not get away. The middle-aged gentleman ran like a boy to the departing carriage, whistled at the driver, and held up the glove as Diantha turned to look. He was smiling as she bestowed her thanks upon him, and remained, hat in hand, by her side. "I beg your pardon," said he, with a questioning glance beyond Diantha at her companion, "but I caught that glove just for a chance to confirm an interesting suspicion I had that you ladies might be——from my own country."

"I think we are," Juliet answered, smiling back. He was such a genial gentleman, and he looked so wistful, she understood his case at once.

"Thank you. I have been over here three months, and this is my first sight of anyone from home. You'll forgive me for claiming kinship, but when a man's alone he's mighty glad to see somebody from his own land."

"We've but just come, but we have looked in vain here for the glimpse of an American."

"This is an English resort, so far free—at least at this time of year—from the American invasion —fortunately, I suppose. But a glimpse of the

real thing now and then touches a tender spot. Health-seeking is a rather dull occupation, I find."

Diantha looked after the tall figure as it presently turned away. "He's another New Englander, I suppose," she suggested.

"Southern, I think—Virginian, perhaps. A gentleman, anyhow, which is all that matters. Very likely he has a daughter or two just about your age."

Into the pleasant boarding-house, looking more like somebody's private summer home than a place for public entertainment, Diantha followed her friend, anxiously hoping it might prove a desirable abode. She listened with interest to Mrs. Robeson's quiet, concise questioning of the landlady, and went with the two to look at the rooms available, her eyes wide open and admiring. The rooms were very comfortable and attractive, furnished quaintly with many odd pieces of old mahogany, the walls adorned with curious ancient prints and engravings.

"Will this room do for you and Agnes, do you think?" asked Mrs. Robeson, turning to Diantha as the landlady left them alone for a minute in one of the upper rooms. "Will the view compensate for the two flights of stairs?"

"I should say it would," agreed Diantha rapturously, gazing out over the blue waters of Tor Bay,

dancing under a brilliant burst of the fitful April sunshine characteristic of the place and season. "This window will be a magnificent spot for Miss Nan to do her morning exercises. How she will descant to me on the benefits of deep breathing when she stands in that glorious breeze, drawing in her breath—one, two, three, four—and letting it out—five, six, seven, eight," laughed Diantha. "I'm so lazy I shall just be blinking at her from the depths of that feather bed there. Do you know, Mrs. Robeson, I'm getting devoted to the feather beds they give us over here—I, who was brought up out West on a corn-husk mattress?"

"You are degenerating sadly. That reminds me, I must make arrangements that Tony and Ann do not sleep on feathers," and Mrs. Robeson went to find her landlady.

In a few hours the party were established at "Hawthornden," congratulating themselves on having so easily found quarters near the beach and the promenade, yet sufficiently withdrawn to include the pleasures of lawn and garden, a tennis court, and a private lane leading to riches of woodland such as only South Devon knows.

"It's lovely here," sighed Diantha Brown, "and yet, with it all, my restless soul yearns for one thing more. Why, *why* must the American mail be a whole day late?"

'High seas, no doubt. Here comes the postman—for the last time to-day," and Mrs. Robeson laughed as Agnes Gilbert jumped up, Diantha made a rush across their sitting-room, and Mrs. Barnes stirred eagerly in her chair and sat up straight at sound of an exclamation of joy in the hall. The girls came back beaming, Diantha hanging over Agnes's shoulder, ready to pounce on her own letters.

"One, two, three, for Mrs. Barnes—four for Mrs. Robeson—and one for Diantha," announced Agnes, retaining some half-dozen for herself, at which Diantha gazed enviously. But when she saw her own bulky one, her name in big black letters like newspaper headlines, she coloured richly, and ceased to deplore the delay and scantiness of the American mail.

CHAPTER V

ACCORDING TO ANTHONY

"THE first letter—how wonderfully good it looks!" cried Juliet, seizing the envelope which bore her own name in a certain familiar handwriting. Two minutes later she was away upstairs in her own room with the door locked. With the eagerness of a girl receiving a love-letter she studied the superscription, in Anthony's firm hand; then she broke the seal, drew out the sheets, and laid them for an instant against her lips. Smiling, she read the first few lines; then lifted her hand to dash away the quick tears their tenderness drew.

"Dear old boy," she murmured, "you do miss us, don't you?—lightly as you put it."

She read on more soberly; then the smiles came back. Anthony's whimsical treatment of the situation was reassuring, even though she could read between the lines:

> We approached the home on our return, Roger and I, as if we expected to find a powder magazine inside with a fuse lit, but meant to face it out heroically. It was my house, so I had to open the door and march sturdily in, as if I weren't feeling the biggest coward in life.

I don't suppose you know, do you, Julie, how that house looks without you in it? In the first place, a deadly silence enveloped the interior. A painful order characterised it. I promptly jerked two chairs out of place, and threw down the evening paper on the floor, to give things a habitable look. Why will you little women insist on having every corner of a house immaculate before you go away? I vow that house had had its hands and face washed, its hair combed and a clean frock on, so we positively didn't know it when we saw it. No reflection on your housekeeping, you know, but the sight of your work-basket, Tony's tin soldiers, and that disreputable doll of Annette's, would have made it seem like home. I should probably have taken the doll to bed with me, if it had been there, so undoubtedly its absence saved me from exhibiting an unmanly weakness!

Roger put up a tremendous bluff. A man of his profession, you know, is naturally skilled in hiding his feelings, so I was not surprised to see him stroll nonchalantly in, cast his hat and overcoat aside, and pick out the most comfortable spot in the room in which to read his evening paper. As he read he began to whistle. This caused me to look at him in astonishment at his nerve. Your humble servant couldn't have essayed to whistle the National Hymn—his lips wouldn't have achieved the pucker. I said nothing, but I noticed the old chap didn't keep it up. He interrupted himself in the middle of the fourth bar with some inane observation on the Russian situation—a remark quite without point, as one might have expected from a man who had only glanced at the headlines.

Mary McKaim—bless her soul—had got up the most stupendous dinner for us. I tell you, Mary knows when to come in strong with the food! She understands when her charges want tea and toast, and when they prefer a rich and juicy beefsteak, three inches thick and broiled to a turn—grilled, as I suppose you will have to say over there. I never did think a grilled steak tasted as good as a broiled one, anyhow! The beefsteak

wasn't the only item—not much. She began with one of those soups of hers—I needn't describe it—and went on through a lot of her special frills to the beefsteak, which she served piping, with one of her grins which reach clear across her Hibernian countenance. It was a sympathetic grin, too. I can tell you, Mary McKaim means to make it up to us as far as her choicest cookery can do it, and I will admit that goes a good way. Yes, —Mary certainly possesses not a little of your own philosophy on that point.

Roger and I ate valiantly. I'm not going to attempt to give the impression that we sat and gloomed over our food, and that the salt tears ran down our sad cheeks and flavoured our soup. They didn't, and you wouldn't believe it if I said they did. No, we ate like a couple of healthy fellows who were rejoicing because they had been able to send off a party of the dearest people in the world to have the jolly time they richly deserved, and who were already looking forward to the hour, only five months hence, when they would join those same people and find them as blooming as they ought to be. We talked enthusiastically about how smoothly we had succeeded in getting your caravel started, and how successfully we had managed all the details of seeing your baggage into the right places. You know a man plumes himself—and with reason—when he achieves the business of transporting four women, two children and a nurse, six steamer-trunks, two big trunks, four rug-rolls, six bags, a bundle of umbrellas—not to mention various small parcels heaped upon the travellers for their use by undiscerning friends after the stuff has gone to the ship—all into the niches prepared for them, without a hitch anywhere. To be sure, there was one awful moment when Nan Gilbert missed her special small handbag in which she carries I don't know what, but should judge all that she values most in life, by the way she looked when she thought it was gone. There was another rather harrowing instant when Tony decided that he had dropped his American flag overboard—the one Roger bought

him on the pier—but I flatter myself that on the whole we got you off about as neatly as could have been asked. By the way, did you see one of your fellow-passengers leaning over the rail, as the ship drew away, yelling back at his friends: "Send it by the next boat—send it by the next boat!"—and trying desperately to remember the name of the next boat and its time of sailing and all that? Roger was chuckling over it at intervals all the way home. "How like a fool a man feels when he's left something like that," he kept saying, "and has to inform a whole pier full of people of the fact."

Yes, as I say, dinner went off very well, and afterwards Mary McKaim brought us our coffee by the fire in the living-room. Then we lit up, and sat, one on either side of the fireplace, puffing away—well—for the most part, I shall have to admit, in silence. Roger made a few spurts of conversation—mostly all of the same character. "They're pretty well out at sea by this time," he would observe heavily. "Got a fine night for the first one on shipboard," I would respond cheerfully, upon which Roger would get up and moon over to the window to confirm my statement. He remained there so long gazing up at the sky I thought best to divert his thoughts, and asked him a question about that odd operation by a German surgeon we saw described in the paper the other day. He answered huffily enough that newspaper accounts of such matters were absolutely of no reliability, and asserted that the thing hadn't been done, and that if it had it wasn't done that way. I wasn't prepared to contest the question, but he tore the whole thing to tatters as if it were a personal affair, and I thought that at any rate I had succeeded in turning his attention from his loneliness. But about five minutes after we had again lapsed into silence he broke out with: "If Rachel isn't seasick she ought to be a good bit heavier by the time she gets across. If she is, it will take off what little she's gained."

And so on. It came to be bed-time at last, though we put it off as late as we could. I used my customary precaution in

filling up the furnace for the night—not to wake the children with the racket, you know! On our way upstairs I caught Roger taking a look in at the nursery door. Why the fellow will persist in doing it—as if I didn't know the remembrance of that first lost baby of Rachel's is all too keen with him yet, after two years. . . . And, by the way, Julie, I think I know what will happen again some day, when Rachel is strong and fit again, don't you? Better luck to them next time.

As I said, we went upstairs to bed. We said good-night at the door of Roger's room, as hilariously as a couple of boys. And then he shut his door, and I went on into the blue-and white room and shut mine. Somehow I never heard a hollower sound than the shutting of those two doors.

Next morning—But, confound it, I'm not going to keep a journal for you after this style. Things always look more cheerful in the morning, and I wouldn't tell you they look any way but cheerful any other time of day if I hadn't a suspicion that if I didn't own up you would find something lacking, and feel bluer over my light heart than I do over my heavy one. Isn't that so, sweetheart? I want you to have the finest time in the world, you know. Yet not quite so fine, after all, that you forget the chap on the other side, or fail to long for the end of the separation. Julie, we haven't been married ten years not to feel the pull of the parting, have we?

I'm going to work like a dog these five months—work so hard I'll earn my vacation. Roger has much the same ambition—as near as I can get at it he's going to operate on every patient who ventures near him, whether the case requires drastic measures or whether a prescription for rhubarb or quinine would do just as well. He had fire in his eye when he went out this morning, and I promise you I shall not mention so much as a toothache in his presence, lest will-y, nill-y, into the ambulance and off to the hospital I go. I know his record is something for the gods to wonder at, but I don't care to help raise his percentage of recoveries. These successful

surgeons—it's as well not to encounter the penetrating glance of their eye! Yet—we had reason enough, once, hadn't we? to be glad that same successful surgeon was on the spot.

I've an idea, as I glance the sheets over, that this letter has something of a feminine quality, in the way it goes into details about a few unimportant hours. Next time I'll send you a different sort, written in a broad masculine style. I'll finely ignore petty incidents, and mention my own life only casually, going on to discuss affairs of moment at the office and in the world at large. But I fancied somehow that I might as well give you a fairly sincere picture of our home-coming, knowing that if I dodged description you would fill it in for yourself and fancy us casting ourselves upon couches, and burying our lonely heads in tear-bedewed pillows. No—it's not that way with men, my little wife. A man bluffs the whole world—himself included, sometimes—into believing he takes his family's absence as a bit of honest relief from the jaded years of home cares, and welcomes a temporary return to the ways of bachelorhood. No doubt some men—many men—feel that way—for a while, at least. But not all, Julie.——

And from this point to the close of the letter—one pregnant paragraph—Anthony told his wife that which a man writes for no other eyes, because he writes it from a full heart.

CHAPTER VI

HOT TEA AND COLD WATER

OH, TO be in England, now that April's there!'" sighed Rachel Barnes, stopping at a five-barred gate in the hedge-row, to lean upon its friendly strength and gaze out across the daisy-starred meadows, ploughed fields glowing redly, and stretches of vividly greening forest, to the distant blue sea. "Mr. Wilton, just hear that thrush! What an ecstasy the little fellow is in. And I don't wonder."

"These English lanes certainly seem like by-ways in Arcadia," responded her companion, adjusting a pair of eye-glasses upon a well-cut nose and observing with interest the details in the spring landscape. The middle-aged gentleman with the martial aspect who had restored Diantha's glove had turned out to be a fellow-boarder at "Hawthornden," and the acquaintance so informally begun had grown and flourished in the fortnight past. Juliet's guess had proved a close one, for Mr. Joseph Wilton's card, presented when he learned that they were to be guests under the same roof, had borne the pencilled information that he

came from Roanoke, Virginia. He had proved an extremely desirable addition to the American contingent, and his loneliness in exile from his family in the attempt to regain his health, broken by severe business strain, had recommended him to the consideration of his fellow countrymen. With Tony and little Ann he made great friends, and their nurse found her time upon her hands during the long hours he spent with the children on the sands. Agnes and Diantha both took a strong liking to his fatherly manner and appreciated his warm interest in their doings; and the older women soon recognised him for the cultured and companionable gentleman he was, a man with the tastes of a scholar and the heart of a youth. Rachel Barnes especially found him a congenial comrade for the walks of daily increasing length she was in duty bound to take, and he beguiled her into enjoying them with less and less thought of fatigue.

"It's all very fascinating," declared Mrs. Barnes, "and I can't be too glad we came to Devonshire in the spring. Nothing could be more beautiful than this countryside. Yet I seem to miss something, I don't know what."

"Perhaps it's food," suggested Mr. Wilton, practically, glancing at his watch. "I've observed that same yearning expression in the faces of

convalescents before now. And by all that's fortunate, here we are at the door of one of those charming old houses where they serve afternoon-tea. "It's sure to be only Ceylon, but that's very good, when it's freshly and properly made, as they certainly know how to do it. Let's go in. You won't feel anything lacking in the English landscape, I promise you, when you come out. And you may as well acquire the afternoon-tea habit first as last—you can't avoid it in the end. All I sigh for is a plate of beaten biscuit to offer you with your cup."

He knocked at the door of the queer little stone cottage, perched upon the very crest of the hill he and Mrs. Barnes had been ascending, set in the midst of fruitful gardens, and close by the ruin of an ancient windmill. From the doorstep where they stood the pedestrians could look off over a fine sweep of countryside, with a promise, when they should explore the ruin, of seeing from the further side all Tor Bay, with its three towns to right and left.

"But just now I'd rather have a slice of bread and butter than the best view they have to offer," declared Mr. Wilton, as the door opened, and he looked into the pleasant face of the young woman who kept the house. A ripple of laughter from somewhere behind her, near at hand, its blended tones suggesting the amusement of several people

not unfamiliar, made him turn to his companion with the announcement: "As I live, they've found out this spot, too. I thought I enjoyed a monopoly of it."

"Not find this place—with the old windmill to challenge us from miles away?" said Mrs. Juliet Robeson, smiling up at them from her place, close by the singing kettle on the hob. At the table, neatly spread with a snowy lunch-cloth bearing a wonderful border of knitted lace six inches wide, sat Agnes, pouring tea. Diantha, on the other side, was consuming thin slices of bread and butter, her small feet comfortably crossed before her, her dark cheeks flushed with the exercise she had been taking, her eyes sparkling with enjoyment. "There's one especially nice thing about Diantha," Agnes had said to Mrs. Robeson, after she had known the girl a fortnight. "Much as she enjoys the society of men, and gay as she is with them, she never gives the impression of being bored with the rest of us when they're not by. It is very flattering to have her desert even the most attractive of her male admirers for my society, and then favour me with her merriest moods."

"She is charming company," Juliet had responded warmly, "and her point of view is sometimes wonderfully refreshing."

She was thinking the same thing now, as Diantha, at sight of Mrs. Barnes, jumped up to offer her own chair, made a requisition for a fresh infusion of tea, and handed plates and bread and butter with the assurance that the butter possessed the most delicately cream-like flavour of any yet found in Devon.

"I can't manage much tea, though," remarked the girl, staying Agnes's hand as it began to pour Diantha's second cup, and diluting the table-spoonful in the bottom with hot water to the very top. "I play drink it, because it's hot and sociable, but I wasn't brought up on tea, and would rather have a glass of milk any day."

"I could let you have a glass of milk, miss," offered the young woman of the house, overhearing this remark.

"Oh, thank you—I'd love it," and Diantha eagerly accepted the queer thick tumbler, full of milk as yellow as the butter itself. Then she paused, took it over to Mrs. Barnes, and begged her to have it. Rachel shook her head, smiling. Mr. Wilton looked on comprehendingly.

"Don't venture to offer a typhoid convalescent milk," he advised,—"or eggs. I believe they do give them solid food early, nowadays—I don't know how they dare—but milk and eggs are the main reliance. Drink it yourself, Miss Brown—

and give us a toast, fit to be drunk in a Devonshire product like that."

Diantha hesitated, smiling. Then she lifted her glass. "Here's to Massachusetts, New York, Virginia and Colorado!" she offered fervently. "United they stand—on English soil!"

"Hear, hear!" called Mr. Wilton, and four cups of tea honoured the sentiment.

"What a fascinating little room this is," observed Mrs. Barnes, looking about it with interest, the wants of the inner woman having been supplied. The repast had ended with a plummy little cake, cut in generous slices, and offered upon a plate draped with another specimen of the cottager's art, a six-inch doily with a four-inch tatted border.

The ceiling of the small kitchen was barely high enough to allow Mr. Joseph Wilton's five feet ten of height to stand upright. The two casement windows looked out through embrasures eighteen inches thick, the measure of the stone wall of the house. The bare floor, its boards dark with age and irregular with the tread of many generations, had been rubbed till it shone marvellously. The iron of the fireplace was black as a raven's wing; the brass crane which swung above it was brilliant with a thousand polishings. The scant furniture was interesting by reason of the evidence it gave of having reached an

honourable old age and the prints upon the walls, yellow with time, drew Mr. Wilton to inspect them through his eye-glasses. Upon one two he cast an envious eye, and presently he had called everybody's attention to them. As he was talking ingratiatingly with the owner about them, plainly with the intent to purchase, Agnes, by the window, announced a change in the weather.

"Here's an April shower. No use putting on your gloves, Mrs. Barnes. It's beginning already, and there's a cloud black as midnight fairly racing up the sky. It's fortunate we weren't on our way back."

The party settled down to wait. The little kitchen grew dark as twilight. " 'Oh to be in England now that April's there,' " quoted Mr. Wilton, with a humorous glance at Mrs. Barnes.

"Precisely," she retorted. "When the sun comes out gloriously on the way home, the country-side will look more entrancing than ever."

The black cloud brought with it a furious burst of rain. At the very moment that this became a deluge, a rush of footsteps and a confusion of voices were heard outside, and the low-hung door swung open. A little flock of five people, panting and shaking the drops from their garments, invaded the room, hurriedly apologising as they saw that it was already occupied. Four sturdily built ladies, with fresh, high-coloured faces, dressed as the

Englishwoman dresses for a tramp and therefore not seriously concerned about the wetting of their excessively practical garments, were followed by one still more sturdily built young man, also in pedestrian garb. The party filled the room to repletion.

"Sorry to intrude upon you," declared the leading lady briskly, "but it was quite impossible to reach the next house before the shower broke. The roads are rather nasty here when it rains, but they soon dry off. It's a pity that the house is so small, isn't it?"

"Please don't mind, in the least," Mrs. Robeson said cordially, as the young woman of the house looked in, appalled by the situation. "Won't you come over by the fire?—you must be very wet. We've had our tea, and are just waiting till the storm clears."

"We don't call this a storm, you know," answered one of the invading party promptly. "It's merely a bit of an April shower, isn't it? It will be fine again, presently, I'm sure. I don't need to come to the fire, thank you. I'm quite all right here."

The Americans grouped themselves by the window, leaving the table by the fire for the use of the others. The Englishwomen talked unremittingly to each other, discussing the walk up the hillside, the promise of the fields, the character of

the soil, the condition of the roadway, the good fortune of their reaching the cottage in time to escape the shower—which, by the way, was still pouring heavily as their tea was served. The Americans occupied themselves with the attempt to converse in low voices on safe subjects without seeming to watch the tea-drinkers, and to show whatsoever friendliness appeared appropriate under the circumstances. The ladies of the other party responded politely enough to whatever was now and then addressed to them—efforts on the part of Mr. Wilton and Mrs. Robeson to carry off a somewhat uncomfortable crowding of the small apartment in a way likely to make everybody feel at ease. But if the Englishwomen did their part, the Englishman rather failed to rise to the occasion.

"I suppose," said Mr. Wilton, finding himself touching elbows with the young man in knickerbockers, and essaying to begin such a brief conversation with him as one man is ordinarily ready enough to enjoy with another when no other entertainment offers, "the moistness of this climate accounts for the remarkable fertility of the soil. The beauty of your fields and dales compensates for the necessity of taking an umbrella upon a tramp like this."

The young man stared. "Oh!—Yes, it quite does, you know," said he.

Finding his opening remark had led into a *cul-de-sac*, Mr. Wilton tried another. "This is a wonderfully picturesque old ruin," he observed. "It must be exceedingly ancient. Have you any idea of the date of it?"

The young man stared again. "Er—no, I haven't," he replied.

The Virginian's eyes twinkled.

"It's not known, I think," observed one of the ladies at the tea-table, pouring a large quantity of milk into a cup of very strong tea. "I should think it would be several hundred years—five, perhaps.—Quite that."

Mr. Wilton pursued the subject with her until it was exhausted, which occurred very soon. Then he returned to the young man.

"I notice some plucky bathers, down at the shore, have already begun the season. The water must be very cold yet."

"Rather," said the young man.

"I've been told, though," persisted Mr. Wilton, "that there are a few who have the nerve to take their morning dip all the year round."

The young man was silent; ultimately he vouchsafed a slight nod. One of the ladies glanced at him. He looked out of the doorway by which he stood, tea-cup in hand.

"It's quite common," said the lady.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Wilton. For the fraction of a second his joyous eye met that of Diantha. Then he, too, looked out of doors. "The storm is about over," he declared.

In ten minutes more his party were outside, splashing along a streaming lane.

"I'd rather swim home," asseverated Diantha, "than huddle up any longer in a six-by-nine room with a party of clams."

"The ladies were very pleasant," said Mrs. Robeson, "in spite of the fact that they were dreadfully annoyed at finding the room occupied. I suppose there's nothing more trying to a party of English people than to have anything interfere with the comfort of taking afternoon-tea."

"If all Englishmen are like that—" began Diantha disdainfully. But Agnes took up the defensive for the sex.

"They're not, at all," she protested. "I've known a goodly number, and they were simply delightful. Not exactly in the way an American man is delightful, but in their own way. Still, I'll admit they aren't always quite as ready as an American to make the best of an unconventional situation. That youth just now was very much disconcerted at being crowded into that small room with a party of strangers. He was shy and awkward—he didn't mean to be rude."

"Oh, it was a frightful situation for him, wasn't it?" Diantha's tone was so scornful it made the others laugh. "With four women to protect him, he was forced to wait out a storm and drink a cup of tea in the same room with five other people he had never seen before. His mother—or his aunt—fixed his cup of tea and came clear over to the door to hand it to him. I could hardly believe my eyes. Why wasn't he dancing round with the tea-cups and the bread and butter, and handing the sugar bowl and asking 'one lump?'—as he ought to have been. That would have taken his mind off himself and relieved his shyness."

"You are pretty hard on the poor youngster," said Mr. Wilton, his eyes showing his appreciation of the girl's putting of the case, but his face sober. "Don't you recognise the fact that our party were rather overwhelming?"

"Not at all. We were five to his five."

"But such a different five. Come—tell me now, you ladies—How did those Englishwomen look to you? Begin, please, Mrs. Robeson."

"Like nice, clever, substantial women, without a particle of nonsense about them. Dressed for comfort and convenience, without fuss as to appearances. Plainly ladies, for they didn't show by a glance what they thought of us for coming out

under threatening skies without putting on close little cloth headgear like our skirts."

"Good. Now, Mrs. Barnes?"

"I admired their healthy faces and bright eyes, and thought with envy how fresh they were after a tramp which quite used me up," responded Mrs. Barnes, smiling at Juliet.

"Miss Gilbert?"

"Now, Nan—please don't leave all the fierce things for me to say," begged Diantha. "You know you noticed how their skirts hung!"

"I'm afraid I did," smiled Agnes, "and how unbecoming the flat cloth caps were—especially to the gray-haired one. But if I could see my own dear, frail, little mother take a tramp like this with the vigour those ladies show I should be perfectly willing to have her exchange her pretty, trailing, gray-silk gowns for their rough skirts and unattractive blouses."

At this view of the matter Diantha quite unexpectedly fell silent, for Agnes's voice had taken on a tender note the other girl understood and sympathised with. The loss of her own mother at an early age had been and still was something which she felt could never be made up. But Mr. Wilton stirred her up again, with the intent to dispel the shadow which had fallen upon her sunshiny face.

"We may have been five to the Englishman's five," he said, "but as I assert, such a different five—four, anyhow—it was small wonder, to my mind, that we disconcerted him. If you ladies could have seen that small room, as it appeared glorified by your presence—Good heavens, my dear Mrs. Barnes, don't look at me like that! How a plain Virginian like myself ventures to go about in the company of this constellation of feminine beauty——"

Such a melodious burst of soft laughter greeted this gallantry that the speaker retreated in mock alarm.

"You Southerner!" charged Miss Gilbert.

"No, no—I'm a South American," he affirmed. "At least that's the inference that's constantly drawn at our boarding-house, when they ask me from what part of the country I am. It's a natural error, I suppose, but rather an irritating one. But to go back to our Englishman. I'm quite confident that he was completely upset by the sight of that same constellation. Next time he see you, you'll find he turns red. And he's likely to see you often, for I've encountered him several times already."

This prediction was soon verified. Only next morning Agnes Gilbert, looking down from her window as she brushed her hair before the glass

close by, called to Diantha who was still half-asleep among her pillows: "Come here, quick, Di! Here's our early morning swimmer, and I believe it's the Englishman we met at the cottage."

Diantha plunged out of bed, pushing her curly locks out of her eyes. She stared interestedly over Agnes's shoulder. "It certainly is! Why didn't we recognise him yesterday and tell him how much we enjoyed seeing him wheel down to the beach every morning with that enormous bath-towel hung round his neck? It might have made him like us. If I had the pluck to take an ice-cold dip like that I should want people to praise me for it."

"I've no doubt your mentioning it to him yesterday would have put him quite at his ease—if it hadn't made him bolt out of the room. I like him better in those decidedly informal flannel garments, don't you? How rugged he looks."

"Yes, fully strong enough to hand about afternoon tea. He doesn't mince matters much, does he—hanging shivering on the brink? A dash into that little shelter, a run down the beach—There he goes—there—there—*splash!* It's all over!—I wish I could do it!"

Agnes shivered. "It's very cold. You'd congeal before you'd gone half-way."

"If I could just swim!" murmured Diantha. "Being a Westerner I can only ride and shoot, I

can't do water stunts. But I could take the plunge. There he comes back.—Now he touches bottom—and wades in. He makes good time up the beach, doesn't he? He'd make better, if he knew the afternoon-tea creatures were watching him. Of course he's all glowing warm now. I should like to try it!"

Something in Diantha's tone made Agnes look at her with concern. "My dear child—don't get such an absurd idea in your head," she warned. "The bathing season doesn't begin here until well into June, and this is only the end of April."

Diantha said nothing more. But she surreptitiously made a purchase at one of Torquay's shops—a purchase which rather caused the saleswoman to stare. Next morning, when Agnes first opened her eyes, she was surprised to find Diantha already up.

"I'm just going for a breath of fresh air," announced that young person, from the corner of the room least observable from the bed. Two minutes later she had slipped out of the room. Agnes arose, wondering, for Diantha was prone to morning naps, and this was the first time she had undertaken exercise before breakfast. Agnes went to the window, to see which way this new enthusiasm might be going to take her friend. She beheld Diantha crossing the lawn somewhat

singularly costumed in the long travelling coat which she had worn while on shipboard, and which now flapped about her heels in an odd way. She had no hat, and she walked very rapidly, looking neither to right nor left, and making straight for the gate, the road, and the beach below.

Agnes gasped. "I do believe that crazy child is going to do it!"

It rapidly became evident that she was. The hour was so early that nobody was abroad, for which the watcher inwardly thanked Heaven. Diantha ran down to the water's edge, slipped out of the coat, letting it drop upon the sand, and revealed herself trimly attired in a bathing-suit of dark-blue. She stood for a moment hesitating, then plunged boldly in. She had not dared to follow the Englishman's example and make her jump from the end of the short pier, not knowing how deep was the water into which he was accustomed to dive. So she was forced to wade out to a sufficient depth and then duck under, a process which made Agnes shiver in sympathy.

"I do hope that young man won't arrive till she's back," she said to herself, fearing that Diantha's performance, unattended as she was, might seem rather shocking to the English beholder. She was anxious also for the effect so unaccustomed an act might have upon the girl's own

constitution and was relieved to note that she did not linger heroically in the icy water, but having gone under once, head and all, promptly waded out and seized upon her coat.

At this unfortunate moment, quite as might have been expected, the young Englishman came into view, briskly 'cycling down to the beach. Agnes saw him turn his head toward the fellow-bather at the edge of the water struggling with the coat, but at that distance, she told herself, Diantha's soaked head might have been a boy's, and the coat itself had a masculine cut, so that the newcomer might easily pass without recognising her.

Diantha, down on the shore, bent over the rubbers she had brought, finding it difficult to insert in them her wet-stockinged feet. She had just risen to an erect posture when the Englishman came out of his shelter, and ran down the stretch of beach. He met Diantha precisely in the middle.

"Water jolly cold?" he called—to the girl's amazement.

"Y-yes, but it's f-fine!" she answered, in her sweet, high voice, and the young man stopped dead. The next instant he had turned a violent red, and mumbled "Sorry, but I thought you"—it was quite indistinguishable what he thought. He dashed on down the beach. Diantha gave one

flashing look after him, then she sped away up to the road, her long outer garment hampering her movements, dripping water all the way.

Agnes threw open her door. "You little wild Westerner!" she began, reproachfully, for the meeting on the beach had caused her something like distress. Diantha flung her a look. Her brilliant eyes, from under a wet tangle of curly hair, were full of a wild merriment, her pretty mouth was one bewilderment of expressions. "It wasn't b-bad at all!" she asseverated, her teeth chattering. "B-but it did take c-courage at the last. W-wading in was so s-slow. But I wouldn't have missed m-meeting the Englishman!—He-he-he-t-took me for a b-boy—and was quite human! He said 'Water jolly c-cold?' But when I answered with a feminine shriek, he—you should have s-seen his f-f-f-ace! It was worth a p-plunge into the Arctic Ocean!"

CHAPTER VII

YOUNG AMERICANS IN OLD OXFORD

IF I may venture to suggest it," said Timothy Fitzpatrick to Mrs. Anthony Robeson, "this isn't precisely the place to be trying the plan of keeping house for yourself. If you could be content to let Mrs. Plunkett see to the marketing for you, and serve you her own favourite dishes, I've the notion you'd be better pleased with Oxford than if you start out for yourself. You see, the markets here all cater to the men's tastes, and it's their likes and dislikes the clever Plunkett thoroughly understands. If you're fairly well impressed with these rooms——"

"My dear Mr. Fitzpatrick," said Mrs. Robeson, smiling at the young man's anxious face, "I'm sure there can be no more charming ones in Oxford. You are planning to establish us right in the midst of the most distinguished locality, here in High Street. I can see at once it is the neighbourhood where strange travellers ordinarily have no chance at all of getting in. I assure you I greatly appreciate it. I really needn't have come on ahead of my party at all, after your letter saying

you had found just the right thing for us. But, you see, there are so many things to be thought of in establishing a party like ours, and I felt I must be quite sure the rooms for Mrs. Barnes and the children were as sunny and sanitary as rooms could be. Now you've attended to all that so beautifully I can only show my gratitude for such kindness by accepting it. I shall wire the rest to come on to-morrow. And I agree gladly to let the accomplished Mrs. Plunkett supply us with the same sort of food which goes to make these brawny young gentlemen I see on all sides."

Fitzpatrick's answering smile showed his relief. He was standing on the other side of the old carved oak table, his hands resting on it, his head bent toward his companion. The two were in the sitting-room of the suite which he had provided for the occupancy of Mrs. Robeson's party. It was one of those upper rooms in the student quarter of Oxford, which, as the end of spring term approaches, are marked outwardly upon the face of the dingy old buildings by gaily contrasting rows of balcony boxes filled with flowers and vines, and inwardly by a pleasing combination of classic decoration, modern luxurious comfort, and youthful masculine treasure. There could be no doubt that those particular apartments possessed the true Oxford flavour.

"That's fine, then," said he, "and it takes a load from my shoulders. If you'd beheld me stroking these rooms into shape after I'd had word from their owner that he'd let them for the month he'd be away, you'd understand the heavy cares I was feeling. A college man's rooms aren't always in just the proper shape to turn over to ladies, you know, and it was a good deal of sorting and culling I had before me. You wouldn't be wanting a lot of pipes and tobacco-jars and cricket-bats and thumbed text-books lying 'round, you know. Plunkett herself would have died before she'd have dared lay hands on anything of Geoffrey Sidgwick's, that's sure. So I had great fun out of it, I did, indeed. I flatter myself the rooms look combed down enough now to suit even Miss Gilbert—and it's in great awe I'm standing of the young lady from Boston, I confess to you."

He went away happy, presently, leaving Juliet in possession of her suite, having begged to be allowed to come again after lunch and take her out for an exploratory drive about the town. It had been impossible to help liking and trusting the young Irishman, who was so evidently also a gentleman, and who had sent her, when he formally begged by letter the favour of being allowed to select rooms for the party, other letters of introduction from more than one Oxonian high in authority.

Mrs. Plunkett sent up to her new guest a lunch so attractive in character, and so well served, that as Juliet sat in solitary state at the old oak table, enjoying it, she was rejoicing that she had ventured to submit to Fitzpatrick so much responsibility. She went to drive with him two hours later, in a hansom, feeling like a girl again, for his manner was most devoted, and his comments on the streets and buildings and other points of interest he showed her, were as entertaining as was the sight of those objects themselves. She was forced to feel, moreover, that he was really enjoying her company, being quick to detect the difference between the perfunctory attentions of the youth who wishes to conciliate a pretty girl's chaperon and those of one who is capable of appreciating the maturer though hardly less evident attractions of an older woman of the sort to which Mrs. Anthony Robeson belonged. If she had known it, the young Irishman considered her quite the most delightful American woman he had ever met. As he exerted himself to do the honours of his town, he was quietly drinking in all the charm of her rarely sweet and wholesome personality, sunning himself in her ready appreciation of his efforts, and being won to show her, not only Oxford, but something of his own life there.

Altogether, as Juliet awaited the arrival of her

party she felt that Oxford was to be even richer in interest and education for them than she had anticipated. Fitzpatrick had shown himself an eager student of history, and had pointed out to her so many places for its study not indicated in any guide-book that she was already planning many full and fruitful hours for them all. She could not help hoping that even to eight-year-old Tony she might make certain great events associated with the place live in colours which should leave their lasting imprint upon his active young brain.

"I can try," she said to herself, as she passed the worn stone cross sunk in the pavement of Broad Street, and recalled the thrilling scene of the martyrs' death it marks, "and I believe I can make him love brave Nicholas Ridley for his 'Be of a good courage, Brother Latimer——' How can anyone mind any petty trial of faith, after seeing that sacred spot?"

After twenty-four hours by herself in the strange town, she was glad enough to see her family. She replied to Tony's eager, "Oh, Mother, *is* it nice enough here to pay for coming away from the seashore?" as he embraced her, with a hasty account of the joys awaiting him in parks and gardens. She told little Annette a tale of a wonderful gold-fish pond in St. John's College garden, and answered Rachel Barnes's searching glance as

she asked, "Are you really glad we have left beautiful Torquay?" with an enthusiastic "Yes, dear —since we couldn't stay there forever. This is the most interesting spot I've ever yet seen—not excepting old Boston itself!"

"Words could no further go," murmured Mrs. Barnes sceptically, glancing about her at the dingy back streets through which their cab was taking them. But five minutes later she was eagerly eyeing the surroundings as the cab rattled from Queen's Street through Carfax into "The High." Her face lighted up as they progressed along this interesting thoroughfare, past the shops, gay with college men's furnishings, to the classic neighbourhood of St. Mary the Virgin's Church. As they looked out upon the imposing fronts of the colleges which stand upon that street, All Souls, University, Queen's, to Magdalen itself, the whole making a classic picture familiar to every visitor to Oxford, Mrs. Barnes was forced to admit that the town's interest lay not only in its associations, but in its own quaint and lovely individuality of aspect.

"Oh, what delightful rooms!" exclaimed Miss Gilbert, the moment she laid eyes upon the charms of Geoffrey Sidgwick's apartments. "And how interesting to be staying in such a place rather than in some boarding-house which would have no

special Oxford atmosphere about it. I will admit that if Diantha's Mr. Fitzpatrick was the means of our coming here, he should be treated with great consideration during the whole of our stay."

As she spoke she was glancing from the art treasures on the unknown owner's walls to the literary treasures on his book-shelves. Diantha had flown to the fine piano whose open keyboard invited her, and was softly touching the keys. "Not that I can play a note," she explained to whomever it might concern, "but it gives me a comfortable feeling that we can have music from somebody. I suspect Patsy's a singer. I caught him getting off a roistering stein-song all by himself one day on ship-board, when he thought there was nobody round. Here's a pile of music. When he calls—I suppose he will call?" She broke off to ask the question demurely.

"Probably," agreed Agnes, absently, from the depths of a Shelley, in hand-tooled leather.

Mrs. Robeson smiled. "I invited him to afternoon-tea, on condition that he should not come to the train to meet us."

"Not?" queried Diantha, who had confidently expected to encounter the bright glance of Mr. Fitzpatrick's hazel eyes the moment the train should enter the station, and had been considerably surprised that she had not done so.

"My dear, even in leisurely Oxford, there are such things as engagements in the way of lectures which a man may not miss without incurring the displeasure of the authorities. Mr. Fitzpatrick was forced reluctantly to admit that such was the case with him this morning. He then announced so wistfully that he should be quite disengaged from the noon hour onward that I hadn't the heart to put him off later than afternoon-tea."

"I should say not. You are a hard-hearted chaperon," murmured Diantha, with her head bent over Mrs. Robeson's and her lips lightly touching that lady's hair—for the space of a second. "But I suppose that's all very dignified and proper. I'll stake a box of 'sweets' Patsy's mind is not on his lecture, just the same!"

"We are to have afternoon-tea, even in lodgings, are we?" asked Mrs. Barnes. "I'm very glad. I believe I'm already acquiring the habit, as Mr. Wilton prophesied I should."

"My dear, being in a college man's rooms, the experienced Mr. Fitzpatrick thought it best for us to allow Mrs. Plunkett, the landlady, to take care of us after the fashion to which she is accustomed, thinking we should fare better. Afternoon-tea is a law of Mrs. Plunkett's life, with which it seems safer not to interfere. I could see the force of his arguments, so I submitted, though I'm

beginning to long to go marketing again for myself."

"I should say that to market for oneself successfully anywhere in England," mused Diantha, establishing herself upon the cushions of the wide window seat—cushions which bore evidence of much use and showed many pipe-burns—"all one would need to do would be to go out and buy six kinds of jam, a bushel of cauliflower, a ham, and a chest of tea. Then, with several dozen steel knives, a couple of teaspoons, and a plate for little cakes, what more would be necessary?"

The hour for afternoon-tea was not long in arriving, and with it promptly appeared Mr. Fitzpatrick.

"Faith, but this is fine!" he ejaculated delightedly, as he shook hands all around. "Wouldn't Sidgwick be the envious lad now, if he could see his rooms blooming with flowers from across the water like this?"

"What blarney!" cried Diantha, as he enforced the greeting of his eyes by a lingering grasp of her hand.

"Blarney, is it? Is that what an American chap gets for his pains when he tells you you're looking fresh as the dawn in your summer frock?"

"No American chap would tell me I was looking fresh as the dawn!"

"What would he say, then? As fresh as the flowers in your belt?"

Everybody smiled at the artful manner in which the young man managed to give utterance to this third compliment on Diantha's appearance—for which he could hardly be blamed. The girl had taken advantage of the mild May day to don a thin frock in which she was unquestionably looking her best.

"He wouldn't be so poetic, by any means. He'd probably say—if he said anything at all—that I looked 'all right.' And I should know he meant it."

"Well, I like that!" retorted Fitzpatrick, with a flash of the eye. "Do you mean to say I don't mean it?"

"I mean to say you're an awful blarneyer," declared Miss Brown. Agnes Gilbert's eyebrows lifted slightly, though she smiled. Fitzpatrick at that moment looked at her.

"I thought I'd had considerable experience in the States," he observed, "but I never was instructed that the proper way to be paying compliments to a young lady was to tell her, like a brother or a husband, that she was looking 'all right'! A dubious compliment, that, I'm thinking."

"I should say," interpolated Agnes, with spirit

"that an American man would be more apt to say something like this: 'You won't mind, will you, if I tell you that you're looking very charming to-night?'"

"That's more like," agreed Fitzpatrick, with satisfaction. "Only I should say it gave less chance for bringing the rosy colour to her face. And what's the reward of flattery, anyhow, if it's not that?"

"You admit it's flattery, do you?" cried Diantha, in triumph.

"Weren't the poets all flatterers, then?"—Fitzpatrick would not be cornered—"It's the most arrant flattery, the love songs they all wrote —Burns, and Byron, and Shelley, and Tom Moore, and the rest. But I doubt if the ladies they sung them to would have preferred to have the gentlemen tell them they were '*all right.*'"

"Sit down, you duellers, and have your tea," commanded Mrs. Robeson from behind the tray, where she sat looking very much at home, her fair face backed by book-shelves full of richly bound volumes. Fitzpatrick jumped to draw the easiest chair in the room into the best position, and instal Mrs. Barnes in it. He offered Miss Gilbert the cosiest corner of the big couch, heaped it full with pillows, and looked about for Diantha. That young person having dropped into a curious

high-backed chair of carved oak, black with time, close by Mrs. Robeson, Fitzpatrick seated himself by Agnes, and began to devote himself to her. The moment, however, that his hostess had prepared her cups, he was up again to hand them about, along with plates, spoons, and thin bread and butter, followed presently by something which looked to be neither bread nor cake, but which smelled delicious and tasted more so.

"These are 'hotters,'" he explained, as he offered them, "extremely popular with Oxford men, and I fancied you'd like them. What are they? Only scones, split and toasted and buttered and sent up on a hot plate, as the wise Plunkett well understands she must. Sidgwick's rather a fastidious chap, and has things about as he wants them. I'm glad they seem to you good."

"They seem to me so good," said Diantha under her breath to Mrs. Robeson, "that after eating them I am sure I can bear up under having twenty-two colleges explained to me. I am prepared to go into every quadrangle, look at the portrait of every founder, and wonder and adore every ancient book under a glass case that may be pointed out to me."

Fitzpatrick caught only a portion of the words, but he saw the mischievous look which accompanied them, though it was not directed at him.

By-and-by somebody asked him to sing. After engagingly explaining that he had but a bit of a voice and could only give the ladies an Irish ballad or two, he proceeded to astonish and delight them all. Then he had his revenge. From an attitude of extreme indifference Diantha gradually and quite unconsciously changed her position to one indicative of frank and hearty appreciation. She sat up straight in the chair where she had been daintily lounging, leaned forward a trifle, and resting her elbows on a table near-by, supported her face in her hands, her eyes unaffectedly fixed upon the singer.

At the piano, Fitzpatrick, striking full, broad chords, after the fashion of the man who accompanies himself, sent a rich baritone voice ringing through the rooms. He chose characteristic Irish songs with a captivating brogue in the words, set to airs which fitted them with the peculiar sweet weirdness that belongs to much of the Irish music. A born singer, he was quite without self-consciousness, and his new friends had never yet seen him to better advantage. His shapely figure at the piano, among the almost stage-like surroundings of the mellow-tinted old room, the comeliness of his well-set head as he lifted it to pour forth floods of melody, moreover a certain indefinable but positive charm

which his whole personality seemed just now to possess to an unusual degree—all these things told strongly in his favour. Noting them, it occurred to Juliet Robeson to wonder, as she glanced from the musician to the most absorbed of his listeners, if by this time the image of a certain military young Westerner might not be beginning to fade from the foreground of Diantha's mind.

CHAPTER VIII

"EIGHTS' WEEK"—FROM THE JOURNAL OF DIANTHA BROWN

THE first day of the Eights' Week races was heavenly fine—quite contrary to my expectations, for I had understood that it invariably rains during such events. Mr. Fitzpatrick came for us, wearing white-flannel trousers and white shoes, a dark sack coat, and no hat, like most of the Oxford men, when they are about the streets. I expected to see them all in cap and gown, but it turns out that's only obligatory at certain times, and that it's very odd to wear that rig when you don't have to. The result is that the undergraduates look almost exactly like those at home—only perhaps a shade ruddier. They tell me that's because such a proportion of them play cricket or row.

We had seen all the visiting girls who had come up for the races going about in the thinnest of light-coloured frocks. So Mrs. Robeson and Agnes put on awfully smart white linen, Mrs. Barnes wore a sort of delicate gray stuff with a wide gray hat, in which she looked ravishing, and I—well, in a spirit of perversity, I arrayed myself all in a pale coffee-coloured frock with brown velvet ribbon sash, and wore the brown hat. They all stared at me when I came in. Then they smiled. Then Agnes said:

"Do you think it's quite fair to the English girls, Di?"

"Fair?" said I, puzzled.

But she wouldn't explain. I think Mrs. Robeson wished I had worn white like the others. But I look like an Indian in white, and pink and blue ribbons don't help it a bit. Wearing

brown seems to take the edge off my dreadful colouring. I appear to myself all the darker in contrast with Agnes's lovely clear fairness, to say nothing of the English girls with their matchless pink-and-white cheeks that look as if you could take a bite out of them.

Patsy took us straight down Christ-Church meadows to the bank of the Isis, where the college barges are moored. Hundreds of people were going, too, mostly college men and girls and chaperons. On the other side of the river there seemed to be a great crowd of people also, but they were those who hadn't invitations to the barges, and so had to see the races from the towing-path. The college men who run along to shout at the eights were over there, too.

"It's pretty tame, seeing the races from the barge," said Patsy to me when we were seated by the front rail. He had walked down with Mrs. Robeson, but when he found us our seats it turned out mine was next his on the other side. "But you want to do it for the sake of seeing the men come in after it's over—particularly if our crew keeps its place on the river. And, of course, you get a general view you can't get from a punt. But it's punting's the jolly thing, and I'm going to take you out to-morrow—if you'll allow me."

I was quite willing to say I'd allow him, as I looked down from the barge deck to the river, and saw the punts floating along, each with a pretty girl—or an approximately pretty one, for I imagine the very, very plain ones don't get asked—poor dears—established luxuriously among the cushions. Sometimes there are two men and two girls, or even more, but I thought the girls who had a punt and a man to themselves looked happiest. Once in a while there was an older woman along, but the chaperoning seemed to be mostly done from the decks of the barges.

The men stand up in the stern of the punt, with a long punt-pole in their hands, and push the boat ahead with vigorous shoves, steering altogether by the same pole. It looks easy

but I suspected it wasn't, for I saw men who evidently were not college men attempting it, and having a dreadful time, colliding with everything, and getting lots of politely irritated looks cast at them.

Patsy presented some Magdalen men to us on his barge, and they were very nice. They didn't stay, but said they'd be back for tea. Patsy stayed with us all through, except just when the crew came in, and then he couldn't stand it but excused himself and went down to see them—as, of course, he ought to do.

It was great fun, watching the whole thing. First the eights went pulling up the river—those who were going to row in the second set of races. Then they came spurting back—practice work, but interesting to watch, they pulled so beautifully together. Then the eleven boats for the first race went up, each putting off from its barge without a bit of fuss, so if you weren't looking you'd hardly know what was happening. Patsy, leaning over the rail at my elbow, told me in a very low tone—everybody talked in very low tones—about the crew, calling my attention to what a fine-looking, brawny lot they were. Magdalen's college flower is the lily, so the little coxswain, in his scarlet jacket, wore a big spray of white lilies, to show that the crew was "head of the river." Patsy explained to us about it.

The Isis is so narrow the boats can't race side by side, so they race in a line! They start off in a long row just so many lengths apart, and each boat tries to bump the stern of the boat in front with its own bow, and to keep from being bumped by the boat in its rear. When one boat bumps another, both fall out of the race for that time, and in the next race the two change places. The one which is leading at the end of the six days of races is called "head of the river"; and it's considered a great honour to win that place, and a still greater one to hold it, as Patsy was hoping Magdalen would do, after having won it the year before from New College. There being twenty-two

colleges, they can't all row at once, but twelve row at a time, the twelfth boat each time being the one which has taken last place in the preceding race. I don't suppose this is very clear!

The barges were moored near the finishing point of the races, so we only knew when they had begun by hearing two distant pistol shots, and by seeing a crowd of men at the upper end of the towing-path beginning to move toward us. They were shouting, and as they came nearer and nearer the sounds grew louder and louder. But they were the only ones who shouted. As they ran they fired pistols, also, to warn their own eights that they were in danger of being bumped.

A good many bumps took place in the "Gut," which is a rather narrow bend in the river, and we couldn't see much of those. But one happened almost directly in front of us, after a hard fight all the way down the river. New College had pursued "Unif," as they call University, like a fiend, and it had grown tremendously exciting. Magdalen was so far in the lead we had ceased to be anxious for her, but these two behind her were fighting for second place. Just as they came close to us, after several minutes during which Unif again and again succeeded in drawing away, New College did run her long nose against Unif's stern, and the cox, who had been roaring his lungs hoarse through the megaphone, gave up with a jerk of his head, and held up his hand as a signal that he acknowledged the bump. The two crews pulled to one side and stopped rowing, quite near us. I watched them anxiously, for they all looked so done I was afraid they were going to die on the spot. Patsy smiled at my suspense, and assured me that they would be all right as soon as they got their wind, but evidently they were in great distress until they did get it, and sat bent over, swaying about and looking white and ill. I was very sorry for the ones who felt like that for nothing, having lost their place, and sorrier still when I saw the way they were greeted when they finally recovered a little and pulled up to their barge. The victorious crew had been welcomed by the people on

the barge with a nice little hand-clapping and subdued calls of "well-rowed!" But the bumped ones were received in a cold silence, their friends—*their friends*—taking pains not to look at them as they came up and disembarked.

"I never saw anything so cruel," I whispered indignantly to Patsy. "Why in the world don't they cheer them up by calling 'well-rowed' to them, too? They did row well—awfully well. The idea of letting them pull their hearts out in a fight to the finish like that, and then treating them as if they were disgraced! Why, it's—it's——"

Patsy was looking into my reproachful face at close range with those laughing Irish eyes of his. "I think they'd cheer up if they could hear what a warm champion they have from the other side of the water," he returned. "Unif's feeling disgraced, sure enough, for losing her place—and so she is."

"She's not! They pulled splendidly, and they were ever so much more used up than the other crew."

"To be sure. They weren't as fit at the beginning, so they're not as fresh at the end. It's staying power that tells in a long tussle like that, more than the ability to make brilliant spurts."

"It's probably all the cox's fault," said I. "How could the stroke keep his nerve with a man roaring like that right in his face?"

Patsy threw back his head and laughed—softly, the way everybody laughs on the river. I never saw anything like it, the quiet of the whole scene as compared with a similar one at home. I spoke to Patsy about it.

"At home everybody would be shouting—you and I among them—and waving flags and streamers, and there would be college yells. . . . Why, I haven't heard a college yell since I've been here—nor any singing. What's the matter with them? I thought they were such lovers of sport!"

"They're by way of being the keenest lovers of sport in the world," said Patsy. "I say 'they,' for being an Irishman I can understand your point of view. When I came here I had to

learn that I wasn't expected to throw up my cap and howl every time my feelings rose to the top. I belong to an emotional race, Miss Diantha, and so, I'm thinking, do you. Your true Irishman, though, can lead the way for an American every time, when it comes to raising the roof with the expression of his joy and his grief. But if you and I were to go down and fall on the necks of that already crestfallen crew, it's not cheering them up we'd be doing, I'm fearing, only making them feel the more like whipped puppies."

"Then we won't do it," said I, promptly.

(I find I've told this out of its proper order, for it happened after the second set of races, and before those occurred we had tea on the barge. The first set were rowed by the twelve crews lowest on the list, and their barges were also lowest in the line.)

Having tea there was really fun. A number of Magdalen men—besides the ones we had already met—came up and joined our party, and they and Patsy were very polite and devoted, and saw that we had plenty of the strongest tea I ever drank, and any amount of bread and butter and all sorts of little cakes. While we had tea, so did everybody else, except the people on the towing-path, who merely looked hungrily across at us. But those in the punts punted to pleasant spots along the bank, and either landed and had tea on the shore, or made it in the boat. They had little kettles and spirit-lamps, and they boiled the water and made the tea, and had it in cups and saucers as nonchalantly as you please. They seemed to be having an awfully good time, in a very quiet way, and I looked down at them rather longingly, in spite of the fact that I was being waited upon by three Magdalen men at once. Patsy saw it—he sees everything—and came and murmured in my ear, "That's what Miss Gilbert and you, and my friend Laing and I will be doing to-morrow, if you're willing."

"I think it will be great fun," I agreed, and so it was.

For next day was "fine" again—really fine, as I mean the word. They use it over here of any weather not actually

stormy. This was luck, for English weather is the most fickle thing on earth. We saw Mrs. Robeson and Mrs. Barnes established on the barge in the company of some very nice people Patsy had introduced to them—professors' wives, mostly—and then we got into a particularly attractive punt, beautifully cushioned and equipped with pillows and rugs. The seats in the punts are very low and wide and high-backed, but because they are so low they are rather difficult to sit in gracefully.

Patsy did the first punting while Mr. Laing made himself agreeable. It turned out that we were not Mr. Laing's first experience with American girls, both of his brothers having married our compatriots, so I thought the freedom from stiffness in his manners might have been due to judicious training on the part of his sisters-in-law. Patsy is a beautiful punter —as he had need to be in the jam of boats we immediately got into—and I soon ceased to fear that we were going to bump into anybody else as long as an expert thrust of his pole could prevent it. He showed to great advantage, standing in the stern, sending us along with mighty but not ungraceful shoves, and keeping up more or less nonsense with us all the time.

During the races we were with the other punts, which gather in a long-drawn-out body, four or five deep, and as close as they can be wedged in together, along the Berkshire shore—Barkshire they call it—Heaven knows why! Each man sticks his punt-pole into the water against the side of his boat, to keep it in place, and the fleet of punts, all moored in this way together, each filled with a flower-bed of colour, makes a very attractive show. I was again struck by the subdued tone of the merry-making. In all the punts the talk and laughter were always kept down to the most decorous pitch. No man ever shouted across at any other man, nobody ever started a college-song, no girl ever forgot herself and shrieked a little shriek of fright or amusement. I was dreadfully afraid I should commit some breach of this wonderful youthful propriety, but by dint

of keeping a close eye on Agnes, and never allowing myself to bubble over more than she did, I managed not to give my new friends a shock.

We went to the races every day but one—we couldn't help it, it got so exciting, the contest between the rival crews. Some had gone steadily up from place to place, others had as steadily lost position after position, until one wondered how, under the daily discouragement, they could row at all. At the end of the fifth day Magdalen was the only eight which had not changed her place for better or worse except Wadham, far down in the line. New College, whose position as "head" Magdalen had last year taken from her, and who had also been bumped by University, had climbed back to second place and had tried fiercely all the week to recover her former laurels. But Magdalen always walked away from her with such apparent ease that we lost all anxiety lest Patsy's college should lose, and became more intensely interested in the struggles of the others. Poor Merton excited my sympathy with her steady losses. Patsy insinuated that it was because I liked the look of her men, but that was not it, at all; it was because she fought so pluckily every time, and because her crew were so evidently "all in" when they finally acknowledged defeat and pulled to one side. Exeter, too, had lost her place each day, Queen's had been bumped four days out of five, Keble four, Brasenose three—and so on.

"What!—not going!" cried Patsy coming in for us as usual, on the afternoon of the last day of the races. Mrs. Robeson and Mrs. Barnes explained that the skies looked too showery, and that five days of races would quite content them. But they graciously permitted us to go. I don't think Agnes really wanted to, very much, but she saw I wouldn't miss it for anything, and like the angel she is she made no objection.

"Nobody ever stays at home for the prospect of rain," said Patsy. "If a shower comes up we'll see that you are kept dry as dry—as you say."

We believed him, and though we didn't put on our flimsiest clothes, we yet didn't do ourselves up in rain-coats. Reaching the river we found everybody out, just as usual, and quite as many muslin frocks in the punts as ever. Mr. Laing explained that so many black clouds in this region loom up and threaten and then pass harmlessly by, nobody ever bothers about them.

It turned out that this time, instead of going all in one punt, we were to go in two. Mr. Laing wanted to have Agnes see the last races from a certain point on the river, Patsy preferred to show them to me from quite another. So we were soon separated, and I sat in state by myself, facing Patsy, who was fuller than ever of his fun, and made me have such a delightful time that I hardly missed the others at all.

We saw the first race from a splendid point, watched "Cats" —St. Catherine—bump Wadham, and poor Merton retrieve herself a little bit by bumping "Wuggins"—Worcester. It was darkening considerably by time for afternoon-tea—which comes in very nicely between the races—but Patsy still laughed at the idea of its raining.

"Those clouds," said he, "merely lift up their heads to scare the Americans into going home, so the Britons can have the field to themselves"—after which I wouldn't have suggested going home if it had rained floods, which it presently did. We were moving slowly along the banks, looking for a nice place in which to have tea, when some great drops began to spatter down. I looked at Patsy, Patsy looked at me.

"I'm fearful we'll get wet after all," said he, with a funny look. He gave a turn to the course of the punt, then two or three big shoves, and before I could realise there was such a place, he had shot us to one side and under a little bridge, at the mouth of a small stream which empties into the Isis not far above the bend. It was the snuggest place in the world. I looked beyond Patsy and saw another punt just moving disappointedly away. It had been making for the same

shelter, and Patsy had got in ahead of it by about thirty seconds!

So then it poured—a regular American deluge, with the sky dark as twilight. But we didn't care. The storm didn't drive our way, and not a drop reached us. Patsy got out a big tea-basket, and handed it over to me.

"Won't you do the honours?" said he, and put aside his punt-pole, took a seat among the cushions opposite me, and proceeded to wait for me to make the tea.

"Why don't you make it?" said I.

"I will, when you and the ladies come to tea in my rooms," said he, coolly. "Just now it would be giving me great pleasure to see you do it. A cup of tea in the American style, now—it would be a refreshing sight."

"I can't do it in the American style without a lemon," I objected.

"If you would let your eyes rest upon the contents of the basket," said he, "instead of looking reproachfully at me, you might see that same."

So I opened the basket, found it fitly furnished forth with everything needed, including the lemons, and proceeded to make the tea. I didn't make it strong as midnight, as the English do, but just a delicious straw-colour, and when the sugar and a tiny slice of lemon were in, it was a cheering cup indeed.

"This sure is comfort," sighed Patsy, throwing himself back on the cushions, when the little meal was over and he had packed the tea-basket again—which he insisted on doing. "I'll not be forgetting this next year, when you are far away. I have to come up one more year, you know. So on this day next year I'll be dolefully looking on at the races all by myself."

"By yourself!" said I, disdainfully. "As if you wouldn't have half-a-dozen girls making tea for you."

He shook his head. "No—no. Not for the world would I efface the memory of this day by the attempt to copy it with a different girl. Besides, there's the rub. The girl would be

so different she wouldn't remind me of you at all. There's no girl like you on this side of the water, and I venture to say there's no twin to you on that."

"What nonsense," said I. "I'm a very common type."

"That young man who saw you off," said he, musingly. "Is he a common type, too?"

Just because I didn't want to colour up, of course I had to do it at this most unexpected mention of Lin. I hoped it was so dark under the bridge that he couldn't see it, but he was looking up at me very sharply from under those curly lashes of his, and I'm afraid he noticed. It was the first time he had mentioned observing anybody see me off.

"Lieutenant Webb," said I, "is quite a common type of the young American man, in one way. In another, he isn't."

"He looked a fine soldier lad," said Patsy, watching me. "He'll be in the regular army?"

"Yes," said I. "He's a West Point graduate, went to the Philippines as second lieutenant, and came back as first—won his commission by great gallantry in action."

"Faith, a man needs to learn great gallantry in inaction, sometimes," said Patsy, smothering a sigh. "There's many of us would like to do that same, if only to look well in the eyes of those we—care for. But—you see—when a fellow who wants to go into the army is forced to learn Latin and Greek instead—he grows that craven he comes to depend on his afternoon-tea like a lady, to put heart into him!—Tell me, does Lieutenant Webb ever make afternoon-tea?"

"He never does. But he can make morning coffee, as I can testify. I've been camping in his party out in the Rockies," said I, and led on by his questioning, I told him quite a little about that glorious time two years ago.

"I'm sore afraid," said Patsy, when I finished, "you'll never recall the making of afternoon-tea under a bridge on a stream off the Isis with the enthusiasm you show over the camp coffee in the Rocky Mountains."

"It's been very nice," said I, looking up at him—he had risen to his knees and was preparing to push the punt out of its position—it had stopped raining—"so nice that the account of it will go into my journal to-night."

"And whom shall you say you had it with? A red-headed Irishman with the County Wicklow brogue, who bothered the life out of you with his nonsense?"

"Indeed, no," I laughed. "With a chivalrous young man—the best company of any I've met since I left New York."

"Ah, who's the blarneyer now?" said he, with a laughing, reproachful glance.

Then he pushed out, and we found that the crews were just coming up the river for the second race, the last of Eights' Week. So we saw Lincoln bump "B. N. C."—Brasenose—and Pembroke bump St. John's—and saw "Maudlin" row triumphantly to the finish, unscathed, thus keeping her position as "head of the river."

"We'll have a bonner to-night down by the adder," said Patsy, "in honour of the crew."

Which, being interpreted, meant that the Magdalen men would burn a bonfire somewhere near Addison's walk. The English college man may be deficient in college yells and college songs, but he certainly has a unique system of college slang, consisting principally in adding "er," or "ins," to every term he uses. Think of calling the classic Martyrs' Memorial—"*Muggins-Mamugger!*"

CHAPTER IX

THE WAY TO LONDON

"IF WE must leave Oxford," said Mrs. Barnes to an acquaintance, an American woman, resident for many years in Oxford, who had shown Mrs. Robeson's party various kindly attentions throughout their stay, "it is great good fortune to be able to leave it on a day like this. It's the finest we have had yet, I think. Besides, the quiet two days going down the Thames will give our girls a needed rest. They do look just a little bit sleepy this morning, don't they?"

The two glanced across the boat-deck at Agnes and Diantha, standing in a group of people, which comprised a Professor and his wife, a Fellow of Trinity, a Don, and one gentle-faced young English girl, the sister of the Don. The party had just embarked upon one of the small steamers which leave Folly Bridge at Oxford every morning for London, reaching the outskirts of the great city at evening of the second day.

"It was rather hard on them to take them away the morning after St. John's College ball, wasn't it?" responded Miss Lucas, her shrewd, bright

eyes resting good-humouredly upon Miss Brown, who was, at the moment, sparring brilliantly with the Don and finding his wit, if a trifle slower than her own, none the less a match for her in the long run. "The young ladies have certainly had all the gaiety that Commemoration Week could give them. I wonder which they have enjoyed most—the early weeks with the undergraduates and the younger Bachelors, like Mr. Fitzpatrick and Mr. Laing, or this last more dignified time with the Professors and Scholars and Dons. They certainly have tried all sorts."

"By your kindness," responded Mrs. Barnes, smiling. "If you had not called upon us at once, in such a friendly way, and asked us to meet all these people, we should not have had half this attention."

"Oh, I know whom to take up," declared Miss Lucas briskly. "I haven't been away from my own country so long that I don't know which are the most desirable of my compatriots. . . . Dear me—there's the whistle. You're going to start and we must be off. I envy you these two long delightful days down the river."

The group on the deck moved slowly over to the gangway, exchanging farewells. The Don, who had escorted Diantha to the St. John's College ball on the preceding evening, the Fellow, who had

taken Agnes to a similar festivity at Trinity on another night, and the Professor and his wife, who had been responsible for various invitations to them all for lawn parties at Worcester, and concerts at Balliol, cards of admission to the Encænia, and many other favours such as only those in authority can extend to visitors in Oxford, took leave of the American party with evident regret.

"I hope," said the Don, retaining Diantha's hand for a slightly more extended space of time than she had ever expected any Englishman to do, "that you will have half as pleasant memories of St. John's gardens by Chinese lantern-light as I shall have."

"I'm sure mine couldn't be pleasanter," responded Diantha cordially. "I shall always recall that as the most dignified and decorous ball I can ever hope to enjoy."

The Don eyed her closely. "Of course that's by way of being another of those two-edged compliments you are so clever at. May I say to you in return that you were most successful in accommodating yourself to the environment?"

"Where in the world is Mr. Fitzpatrick?" whispered Mrs. Barnes in her co-chaperon's ear. "In spite of all this nonsense Di has been getting off, I'm confident she is disappointed at not seeing him."

"Don't be anxious about her. She had a note from him this morning, besides those sweet peas she's carrying. I hope the real farewell *is* over, but I suspect he'll appear to us yet," answered Juliet, waving her handkerchief at the group on the pier as the small steamer swung slowly out into the Isis. "Mr. Laing didn't appear either, you observed, though he was at the house yesterday. So there's small doubt we'll see them somewhere between here and London—since I positively refused to invite either of them to look us up there."

"Isn't it fun that we should happen to be the only passengers on this baby boat?" Diantha came up to them, putting away her handkerchief after a final flutter toward the now distant pier.

"Few touring Americans take time for so slow a trip." Agnes gave this as the reason for the unexpected and welcome solitude. "English people up for 'Commem' probably hurry home by rail. But there are thirty-three locks and innumerable villages between Oxford and Kingston, so our good fortune may be invaded at any time."

"Till it is I'm going to be thoroughly comfortable, after the solemn whirl of Oxonian festivities I've been through," and Diantha disappeared down the cabin stairway. She returned after a minute, the cabin-boy behind her bearing an armful of steamer rugs, and several cushions purloined

from the empty cabin. With these Diantha arranged accommodations for all the party except Ann and Tony, who preferred to play about the boat, and then curled herself up on a seat under the awning forward, and promptly went to sleep.

"Wake up, Di—we're passing Iffley Lock, where 'Tom Brown's' boat upset," called Agnes in the slumberer's ear when a few minutes had gone by. Diantha stirred and looked at the surrounding scene with heavy eyes. Then she dropped back into repose, murmuring as she laid her head down, "That incident certainly made him one of the Brown family."

"Sandford"—" Nuneham" — "Abingdon"—announced Agnes, at intervals, sitting near Diantha, chart of the river in her lap and Baedeker at hand, and read aloud to her mostly unconscious victim items of interest to which the others dutifully listened. But as the day wore on everybody grew content to sit dreamily upon the steamer's deck, letting the quiet, green shores and clusters of habitations glide by without much active comment upon their beauties, and rousing only when some more than ordinarily noteworthy object claimed attention.

"Diantha's journey down the Thames will be principally a hazy memory of embarkation, lunch, afternoon-tea and landing," remarked Agnes, as

at four in the afternoon the party sat about with tea-cups in their hands and raisin-dotted cake upon the plates in their laps. "Are you planning to take to your bed at the Red Lion the moment you land at Henley?"

"I'm beginning to wake up now," responded Diantha, nibbling her cake with zest, and making a requisition for hot water from the attentive cabin-boy—who had been a respectful worshipper at her sleep-enshrouded shrine all day. "By the time we get to Henley I shall be ready for whatever adventure offers."

"Since we're too early for Regatta Week we shall find only a drowsy town, eminently suited to your let-down condition."

"Why do we go to the Red Lion? Don't you think the Angel seems better adapted to a party whose only man is eight years old?"

"At the Red Lion we shall see Shenstone's quatrain, scratched on the glass—remember?—

> "'Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn.'"

"May I ask if you knew that before, or if you just quoted it out of that omniscient little red guide-book?"

"Both. That's a saucy question, and shows you really are awake."

"So much so that if Mr. Shenstone were present I'd tell him at once that it was evident he'd never been entertained by Mrs. Anthony Robeson. 'Warmest welcome at an inn,' indeed! What an unpleasant house-guest he must have been to have acquired such sentiments."

Diantha was undoubtedly awake, as her companions now found reason to take note. As the boat slid into one of its locks she was seen interviewing the captain—a person who had observed her throughout the day only less interestedly than the cabin-boy. A minute later she was observed walking away down the towing-path at a great pace, which presently, as she reached a point at some distance ahead where the path was half-obscured by low-hanging trees, quickened into a run.

"Oh, yes'm—she'll do it easy. She's a light-footed one, that," replied the captain, when Juliet questioned him. Before his craft was at the bottom of the lock he had gone ashore himself, and was discovered picking a bunch of purple and yellow pansies from a flower-bed close by—one of those perfectly tended lock-keeper's flower-beds which make spots of beauty of many otherwise prosaic halting places along the river. When

the next lock was reached, and Diantha, flushed and merry, ran on board, the captain met and presented her with the flowers, Diantha came back to her friends triumphant.

"Who says Englishmen are not gallant?" she inquired, fastening the posy in her belt. "And I've not only won a trophy—I've stirred up my circulation, and no longer feel the need of a rug. I'll advise you all to do likewise."

"I'll take my exercise at Henley," promised Agnes.

But she failed to carry out that intention, for the boat was late in reaching port, and by the time the slow dinner at the Red Lion had been eaten, the party, after the long day in the open air, found themselves disposed for little except further slumber. Next morning, however, they were all up at an hour which made the inn people stare, and before breakfast had explored the town with considerable thoroughness.

That meal over, they were promptly at their boat, rejoicing in a second day of brilliant promise. Diantha had given both sweet peas and pansies a revivifying night's bath in her washbowl, and now wore a parti-coloured bunch pinned on the front of her fresh white blouse. The others were variously decorated, for the Henley flower-gardens had been irresistible.

As they stood at the rail, watching the preparations for departure, a train rolled across country and into the station not far away. In a brief space of time, in advance of a small group of other passengers, appeared two who swung their hats as they came. They hurried up and over the gangway, the one looking audacious and the other a trifle shy.

"You are sure I said you might?" questioned Mrs. Robeson, as Timothy Fitzpatrick murmured something appealingly in her ear, "I thought it was only permission to come on board at some one of the halting places, and say good-bye!"

"And small satisfaction there'd be in that! We'd rather have got it over in Oxford, with the rest of the gossoons—I beg their pardon—gentlemen and scholars. It was up at daylight we were, Mrs. Robeson, to get out of the town and down to Reading in time to reach Henley for this boat. Small breakfast we had, I assure you—and we've brought the best lunch the King's Arms could put up, not to mention an extra basket from Boffin's full of sweets and the like. Here's the lad with them, now. Won't you do us the honour of accepting them? Or will you have me present the boy with them to take home to his mother?"

"You're the most artful wheedler I've found on this side the Atlantic!"

"Sure, I need to be that. No man shall tell me the American girls aren't chaperoned by ladies that will have a chap at his best—or not at all. On my honour, Mrs. Robeson, I didn't mean to be taking advantage of the favour you allowed me. If you don't want us to stay, now, we'll be off at Hambledon Lock, and get back as best we may."

But he was smiling, for he saw that she had not the heart to be hard with him—as people seldom had. In five minutes more the whole party were established, with all manner of attention from the two invaders, in the full and grateful sunshine of the upper deck amidships, which lay but a few steps above the awning-sheltered bow. Fitzpatrick was at his gayest, and young Laing, who, from several years' association with the Irishman, had become not unequal to following his friend's lead on occasions like these, was doing his full share at making good his claim upon a welcome.

For several hours throughout the forenoon and during lunch, eaten in the shelter of the cabin on account of a sudden shower which appeared from nowhere and shortly disappeared into the same region, the liveliness of the young people was unabated. Diantha, apparently fully refreshed by the previous day of idle quiet, was as full of

spirits as a child at play. It occurred to Juliet, however, as the day progressed, that as Diantha's mood grew more animated Fitzpatrick's was becoming correspondingly less so. In the middle of the afternoon, when the boat reached Windsor, and the party, having an hour to spare, set out on a hurried walk to Windsor Castle, the young man from Oxford had grown somewhat noticeably sober and silent.

It chanced that the royal resident was upon the ground, as the royal ensign flying from the tower proclaimed, so admission could be obtained only to the stables, and to St. George's Chapel. The latter place therefore received the party's full attention, and the brief time at their disposal was given to its interesting interior. Diantha had walked up from the boat with Laing, but as the party scattered about the chapel she found Fitzpatrick at her elbow.

"Here's where all the royal marriages take place," said he, leading the way toward the altar, and calling Diantha's attention to various emblems upon the walls denoting the high condition of those whose worshipping place this was. "How should you be feeling, may I make bold to ask, if you were expecting to walk down this aisle tomorrow to be married to the Prince of Something or Other, yourself being a Princess of the Blood?"

"Horribly unhappy, I expect," answered Diantha, quite soberly regarding the spot he pointed out to her as the place where the imaginary pair would kneel for the ceremony.

"You should? And why that?"

"Because of course I shouldn't care a bit about him. Everybody but myself would have arranged the affair, and I should just be going through with my part because I couldn't get out of it."

"You would have done your best, I'm thinking." He glanced out of the corner of his eye at the face beside him. Diantha's eyes were fixed upon the chancel step.

"I should indeed. And failing that—No—I shouldn't be here. I should be miles away, galloping on a black horse, out of the kingdom—out of the world, if necessary. Come—let's go back and look at that beautiful memorial to the Prince Consort in the transept."

"Ah, there now—there was a royal marriage that wasn't an unhappy one," whispered Fitzpatrick, a few minutes afterward, as they stood studying the wonderful marble figure of Victory which commemorates the profoundest experience in the life of Victoria. "She galloped off on no black charger to get away from the man she'd given her heart to."

"This is the most interesting chapel I've been

in"—Diantha had a way of changing the subject without let or hindrance, when she considered it the part of discretion—"but I seem to feel the shackles here, just as I've felt them all over England, the minute I get under these historic old roofs. Every little while the longing seizes me to jump over five thousand miles of space and be out in the open, with nothing in sight but the plains, and the foothills blue in the distance, and a straight path between. When I get to thinking about it, I simply can't breathe in a place like this, with everybody tiptoeing about, and a sentinel at the door, and nothing in sight that isn't mossy with age."

"It's not homesick you mean you are?" Fitzpatrick's tone was anxious. There had been a considerable interval between Diantha's last speech and this question, for the words had no sooner left the girl's mouth than she had joined herself to Mrs. Robeson, who had approached her at the moment, and from whose side she could not be coaxed away until the party had started upon their return walk to the boat. But as they hurried down the hill, urged on by the steamer's summoning whistle, Fitzpatrick found opportunity to put his concerned question.

"Homesick?—Oh, no—except just once in a while, as I say. I'm all right now I'm racing

along in the open air—so glad I don't belong there, and nobody has any claim on me, and I can get away from Windsor Castle when I want to!"

"Nobody has any claim on you? Would you let me ask, if—back there in America——"

"Oh, Uncle Ephraim and Aunt Henrietta have the biggest kind of a claim. They're the dearest old people that ever lived." And Diantha launched, post-haste, into a description of Uncle Ephraim and Aunt Henrietta which lasted all the devious way down to the boat and over the gangway. To it all, it may be said, Fitzpatrick gave the polite attention he never failed to render, but though the narrator put in many charming bits of description, and not a few wholly amusing anecdotes, he seemed somehow to have quite forgotten that he ought, now and then, at least, to smile.

After Windsor, a slight change in the weather—corresponding perhaps to the feelings of some of the party—brought about a general change of tactics. Threatening clouds came up, a breeze with a touch of chill in it began to play about the decks, and Juliet sent her children with their nurse into the cabin. But the others, donning wraps, took up a position in the bow of the boat, where they could least feel the wind coming over the port quarter, and where, by means of steamer

rugs, they could keep comfortable while passing through one of the most interesting stages of their journey. Fine country-places were becoming thick along the route, some of them attractive quite beyond description. Besides, nobody wanted to miss Magna Charta Island where, low and swamp-like as are the surroundings, the traveller finds a special zest in noting the place, marked now by a small house, where lay the stone upon which King John signed the fateful instrument so many hundred years ago.

When this point had been passed, Diantha shivered. "What a goose I was to wear a linen frock and bring only this thin jacket," said she, preparing to make a mantle out of her rug. But Fitzpatrick sprang up.

"Please take this coat," said he, dragging forth a raincoat from under a pile of rugs. "I'm not wanting it—only brought it because I thought it might be useful to somebody."

Without hesitation Diantha let him help her on with it. She was entirely used to donning, with true Western unconcern, any sort of apparel offered her in an emergency. When Fitzpatrick pulled a matching cap out of one of the pockets and offered it to her she promptly removed her own beflowered headgear, and stowing it safely away pinned the cap upon her curls, now blowing all

about her face in the breeze which was stiffening every moment. Fitzpatrick's eyes plainly showed the satisfaction her adoption of his raiment gave him, and the ladies looking on observed it. But Diantha was clearly as unconscious as an infant that a perfectly common-sense acceptance of a needed protection from the weather could be a matter for self-gratulation on the part of the donor. Though she laughed gaily over her probably absurd appearance in a coat which came down to her heels, whose sleeves she was forced to roll back, and whose shoulder-arm seams lay somewhere near her elbows, she was quite evidently unaware that in this singular garb she was undoubtedly a shade more enchanting than she ever had been before.

There was only an hour left of the journey, but Diantha elected to spend it sitting beside the pilot, talking with him and turning his head completely, so that the party had fears for the safe conduct of the boat. Judging from the appearance of the two at the wheel, they had entered upon some sort of a discussion. The others, in the bow of the boat, looked back at them from time to time and found the little scene rather more entertaining than anything now to be observed along the shores.

"There comes the captain to join in the debate," said young Laing in Mrs. Robeson's ear, as he sat

beside her. "It must be getting rather warm for the pilot, judging by Miss Brown's expression. I'd jolly well like to be able to hear it."

Ten minutes later the whole party had ceased to note anything upon the landscape, so interested were they in watching the affair at the wheel. The charming part of it was that Diantha seemed to be absolutely unaware of this observation, and to be wrapped in the interest of defending her beloved country from the attacks of a pair of amused and delighted Englishmen of the class who do not ordinarily come much into contact with young persons of her sort. Those who knew her best could have no doubt of the reality of this absorption. Even Fitzpatrick, keen at detecting coquetry in the feminine sex, was forced to admit to himself that Diantha had forgotten him completely and was having without his assistance a more entertaining experience than any that had come her way that day.

"I say, this is getting ripping!" chuckled young Laing. "Here's the engineer. He stands at a respectful distance, but he's on deck, and he's listening. It only wants the cabin-boy, and the full crew will be standing at attention. I wish my sister could see this. She'd simply faint away, you know!"

"It may seem a little odd to you," answered

Mrs. Robeson, smiling, "and so it is. Yet with us all so near——"

"Oh, it's quite all right! Please don't interrupt it. It's merely the funniest thing I ever saw, the way those chaps hang on her words. I was thinking that no English girl could show such a lack of self-consciousness as that—more's the pity!"

"Faith, here *is* the cabin-boy," murmured Fitzpatrick, leaning forward. His handsome face had lost its sulky expression, he was enjoying the scene before him as if it were a play, with an unusually captivating central figure. The cabin-boy had actually emerged from below, and stood, behind the engineer, drinking in Diantha's logic with open mouth and staring eyes.

A great guffaw from the captain and pilot brought Diantha to her feet. It was an entirely respectful laugh they were having, at certain quite irresistible conclusions she had forced upon them, but it seemed to sound a warning note in the girl's ear. Her glance fell, for the first time, upon the laughing faces in the bow, upturned to her, and she slipped out of her seat by the pilot and vanished from view as suddenly as if she had been a sprite.

"I was beginning to get a bit anxious about the engine," declared Laing, as the crew dispersed, "so perhaps it's just as well. I should have been

shouting 'Hear, hear,' myself, quite without knowing Miss Brown's argument, if the debate had gone on much longer."

Diantha did not appear again until the steamer was drawing in to the Kingston pier, where the party were to separate. Laing and Fitzpatrick had, according to schedule, just time to catch their train in order to sleep in Oxford that night in compliance with college regulations, so they were not able to see Mrs. Robeson's party off for London. Consequently, for some time before Diantha came back, Fitzpatrick was looking distraught. There were barely five minutes remaining when she emerged from the cabin, demurely clothed once more in her own garments, the borrowed coat on her arm.

"A hundred pounds wouldn't buy the old coat from me now," said a voice in her ear, as they stood side by side, with the others, waiting for the boat to make her dock. "Besides the honour you've done it, you've left a bit of yourself remaining in it, that's worth——"

"My handkerchief?" questioned Diantha, solicitously, slipping her hand into the pocket nearest her. "Give it to me, please. I never let people keep things of mine."

"You'll not be able to help it this time. It's not a handkerchief nor a glove I'm retaining—

though you've my permission to leave your hand in that pocket as long as you like"—Diantha promptly snatched it away—"But there's something more subtle——"

"Mr. Laing," said Diantha, turning to the young man upon her other side—and proceeded to give him her entire attention until the party were over the gangway. It was not until the final farewells were being said, with the guards of the train giving warning upon the platform, that Diantha's eyes reluctantly met those of her Irish friend.

"You've given me the sort of day only yourself knows how to give," he said low, as her swift glance fell. "A handful of thorns—with a rose in the centre—that's the American girl. *But the rose is that sweet*——"

"Good-bye, Mr. Fitzpatrick," said Diantha, smiling indeterminately at his scarf—or his chin—he could not tell which—"and thank you, once more, for all your kindness. Good-bye—good-bye, Mr. Laing. Good luck to you both!"

Pacing up and down the platform, as they waited for the London train, Mrs. Anthony Robeson said to Mrs. Roger Barnes, "Taking a pretty girl to England is rather a soul-racking affair, isn't it? If ever a girl was quite able to fend off her admirers for herself, Diantha is that girl. Yet——"

"Yet," replied her friend, "it is the girl who does that most successfully who draws them on the fastest. It will ever remain a problem, Juliet, why the signal for retreat invariably precipitates a charge. But that it is so——"

"That it is so, I, who witnessed the tactics of Rachel Redding, five years ago, know beyond question!"

"I learned them," replied the laughing Rachel, "from your husband's descriptions of you!"

CHAPTER X

IN A LONDON SHOP

MR. LOCKWOOD!—Indeed, I'm extremely glad to see you! I wasn't at all sure you'd find us after my rather inadequate directions."

"Weren't you? I should have said I'd only to ask for the one American woman who cares to live in apartments in London when she's only staying for a month, and might much more easily, one would think, go to a hotel. It is, to say the least, my dear Mrs. Robeson, a truly characteristic and significant act."

Juliet laughed. "You can't tell us we're not comfortable," she suggested, offering him a chair, "even if you don't quite approve of the early-Victorian style of our decorations. And with the little folks we're certainly far better off than we should be at a hotel."

"I've no doubt that's true—from your point of view. I can hardly imagine Mrs. Robeson's children becoming 'hotel children' even for the brief space of a month, if their mother could possibly prevent it."

"I'm sorry to be the only one here to greet you,"

said Juliet, presently, as Lockwood looked up interestedly toward the door at the sound of an approaching footstep. "After a week of Westminster, and the Houses of Parliament, and the Wallace Collection, and Hampton Court, our ladies have deliberately planned a whole day of shopping. They appeared to be absolutely regardless of their duty to all the rest of the show places. They are at this moment, I suppose, turning off Oxford Street into Regent."

"I shouldn't suppose Oxford Street would satisfy any woman who took the first steps down Regent," commented Lockwood. "All I know about it is the difference between the style of window decoration current in those two thoroughfares. In Oxford, I believe, they put every pair of gloves they own into the window to advertise a glove sale. In the better street they use only a judicious selection, quite on the American plan."

"You are wonderfully discerning—for a man. That's precisely what Diantha and Mrs. Barnes said, when Miss Gilbert had taken them through that district. Miss Gilbert is very familiar with London shops and knows ever so many modest places where reliable goods can be had at low prices. But she admits the fascination of Regent and Bond Streets and of the Liberty shops in particular.

I believe they expect to spend the morning in the one where the scarves are to be had."

"Are they? Then I see my chance! I shall presently betake myself to that very place. I have a commission from my sister to bring her no less than a dozen of those scarves, to use for gifts and—frankly—for herself. I haven't a notion how to go at it. Perhaps your friends will take pity on me."

"I'm sure they will be delighted. Although, if you blindly shut your eyes and seized the first dozen within reach you wouldn't find your sister badly suited."

"An idea occurs to me." Lockwood's eyes brightened. "Won't you go down with me, out of the kindness of your heart, on the chance that we don't find your party? Then, if we do, if I may have the pleasure of taking you all to lunch at my favourite place in Piccadilly, I can, perhaps, help you afterward to round out the day."

Juliet hesitated. Then she shook her head. "It's a temptation," she admitted. "But I've letters to write, and I've promised to take nurse and the children to the Zoo in the afternoon, while this fine weather holds. I'm sure you won't miss finding the others. They can never get away from the little room upstairs where the scarves are shown. If they should try to leave they would

have to go by a perfectly bewildering display of necklaces of a sort no other shops seem to keep, and you would find them caught there irresistibly.

"That sounds promising—but I'm sorry you won't go. I should like the full complement of your party. Do you know, I can't help thinking you're astonishingly lucky to have got together such a combination as yourself and those three? Mrs. Barnes—you don't need to have me tell you my opinion of her. Miss Brown is a sort of *sauce piquante* to whatever dish she is mixed with. Then, Miss Gilbert—Mrs. Robeson, Miss Gilbert seems to me decidedly more than the average accomplished and cultivated young woman."

"She is very much more, and I'm glad you have the discernment to see it. I appreciate her more every day. She is not only beautiful and charming and good—she is the genuine sort that wears. She has the qualities which make her a friend worth having. I'm particularly glad she is with us, because association with her has been the best thing that could have happened to my little charge Diantha."

"I should fancy so. I've known Miss Agnes through several years, but I didn't appreciate her except in a very superficial way until I met her in April during the crossing. There's something about pacing the decks together, you know, which

gives a man and woman a far better chance to make each other's acquaintance than any amount of sitting side by side at formal affairs on land."

"I know. Didn't she look charming on shipboard?" suggested Juliet, artfully, with a woman's unfailing instinct for perceiving when a man would like to discuss personalities concerning another woman but would be glad to have somebody else take the lead. "When I saw her looking so breezy and merry I felt as if I'd never quite known her before myself. She didn't seem a bit 'Bostonian' any more—just a sweet and lovable girl with whom one could have the best of times, and yet with a background of—well—of intelligence?" She laughed as she used the word, and Lockwood laughed with her, understanding precisely what she meant.

"The intelligence has been all to the fore on previous acquaintance," he admitted. "Delicately veiled, of course, but not to be ignored. It's the girlish and human aspect of her which interests and pleases me now—the assurance that I needn't always bother to discuss great questions of life and literature with her, if I don't happen to feel so inclined. It's no small relief, Mrs. Robeson, to a man, to find out that he needn't always talk up to a certain uncompromising standard with a woman. He feels let down occasionally, you

know, and not up to putting his ideas into epigrams. He likes to be allowed to be inconsequent—just as he likes to be tremendously serious and judicial on great questions when that mood seizes him."

Lockwood got up and took his hat. "Do you know," said he, with a twinkle of the eye, "I shouldn't imagine Miss Gilbert and I discussed books and art and socialistic theories and philanthropic problems more than one-third of the way over—after the first day? I never should have believed it possible to get upon such every-day, natural ground with a young college graduate whose home is in Boston, and several of whose female relatives are prominent club-women and college presidents and professors!—Well—I must be off. Upstairs in the corner Liberty shop, you say? I'm genuinely sorry you won't come with me. You'll let me look in often while you're in town? Thank you—thank you. Good-bye!"

It was not difficult for Mr. Louis Lockwood to find that particular one of the Regent Street shops which contains that bewildering collection of the most captivating article of apparel known to the taste of woman. The windows held a display of rainbow-tinted scarves and shawls and sashes calculated to attract even the indifferent masculine eye, and after one discerning, recognising glance

Lockwood turned confidently within. Bearing in mind Mrs. Robeson's instructions he made straight past all sorts of alluring articles, in charge of solicitous salespeople who were ready to serve him, and found his way up a small staircase which led to the room above. At the top he paused, his eye scanning the groups of purchasers who thronged the place, himself unsolicited by any of the trim young women who were waiting upon them. The force was more than usually busy on this fine July morning in the midst of the "American season."

Over by a distant window he presently espied the trio for whom he sought. He moved slowly nearer, avoiding an appearance of being interested in the wares for sale, and assuming the demeanour of the bored but patient male escort who awaits as best he may the conclusion of the shopping of his feminine relatives. By this method he was soon able to ensconce himself in an inconspicuous corner where, without attracting anybody's attention, he might take the somewhat unusual opportunity of observing those in whom he was interested when they were not aware of being under scrutiny. He indeed felt this to be somewhat unfair, but the temptation was irresistible, and he yielded to it without compunction—sustained, perhaps, by the memory of a certain adage,

according to which, given certain conditions, all means are fair.

Looking out from the shelter of a pile of Japanese silk kimonos Lockwood beheld his friends absorbed in the survey of a great showing of scarves and sashes, adapted to as many purposes as ingenious fingers are capable of devising. They were all very plainly interested in the task, but the differences in the fashion of their procedure were worth noting.

Rachel Barnes, sitting composedly in a chair, was quietly regarding one after another of the articles held up to view by an attentive saleswoman. This clever person had at once discovered in the charming lady before her, who indicated her selections by a little wave of the hand after a briefly critical inspection, and who bought without special regard to price, a customer to whom it was worth while to show her best. The young girl beside her with the vivacious manner and the disposition to hunt the piles of goods over and over, and turn everything inside out and upside down, and exclaim and hesitate, and finally choose and reject, all in one breath, the saleswoman understood at once would not buy heavily. So while Diantha rummaged for herself, the alert young woman was devoting herself to Mrs. Barnes. Meanwhile she was keeping an observant eye o..

the third member of the party, turning to her often enough to give her the benefit of her attention, while leaving her, as the saleswoman was shrewd enough to guess that she preferred to be left, to make her selections unhampered by superfluous advice. For one had only to look at Miss Gilbert twice, thought Mr. Louis Lockwood at his post of vantage, to see that she would easily be the most skilful shopper of the three.

Yet, just at present, it was not her cleverness at choosing the best for her money which held the eavesdropper's interested attention, but the extremely feminine and fascinating picture she presented in doing it. Her fine eyes dwelt upon the bewildering beauties of the airy fabrics she was inspecting with as much delighted absorption as if they had never dwelt upon the beauties of literature; her skilful fingers draped the scarves into alluring combinations with as feminine a touch as though she had been trained in a milliner's shop instead of a university; her lips, in response to an excited demand for admiration from Diantha, murmured "Simply exquisite," with as much fervour as if she were praising the perfection of a sonnet. Altogether, there was about the whole appearance of Miss Gilbert, to the lawyer's pleased satisfaction, sufficient evidence that she could be precisely as womanish and

frivolous and—yes, even as interested in the details of her own adornment—as the most of her sex.

For, even as he looked, Agnes turned toward a mirror close at hand and held a long and heavily fringed scarf, of a peculiar peach-coloured hue, under her chin, studying the question of its becomingness to her own not un-peachlike complexion. Her face in the mirror, as she thus posed, was directly presented to Lockwood's view and he unhesitatingly, if silently, pronounced it as his opinion that if anything could add to the attractiveness of an already enchanting face, that scarf was the thing. But the next moment she had substituted one of a fair shade of turquoise, and he was at once ready to swear that it was the colour of colours to set off her irreproachable skin.

"Diantha," said Agnes, "which of these is the prettier, do you think, to wear with that evening coat of mine?" She spoke in a low tone, but Lockwood was quite near enough to hear.

Diantha dropped five sashes and a square shawl to give the matter her whole attention. In her turn she held the blue and the peach-hued scarves successively under her friend's shapely chin. "You'd be a dream in either," she declared, "were t'other dear beauty away. Why not take 'em both?"

"They're dreadfully expensive," objected Agnes.

"Of course. The loveliest always are. Every one of those I want most is marked sixteen-and-six. That extra sixpence is an insult. I might strain a point and recklessly spend the sixteen shillings, but the extra sixpence holds me back."

"These are twenty-five shillings each," said Agnes, in a tone of such genuine regret that Lockwood felt a sudden intense desire to present her with his own well-filled pocket-book. He understood that while she was of a family whose name was more to be valued than many dollars, the dollars themselves were probably not so plentiful as to be lightly spent.

At this point Diantha leaned forward and whispered something in Agnes' ear, her own face assuming a mischievous expression, and her lips curving with fun. Agnes immediately blushed in the most engaging and girlish fashion, and in doing it looked less like a college graduate and literary young woman than ever. It was now that Lockwood came suddenly to the conviction that he could no longer tarry behind the kimonos but must join in the discussion. He had no means of guessing what insinuation had caused that display of emotion, but he felt irresistibly impelled to see what effect his own appearance at that particular moment might have upon the

choice between those two scarves at twenty-five shillings each.

"Well, well—how lucky I am to find you," said he, briskly, addressing Mrs. Barnes as he arrived at her elbow. "I'm shopping for this sort of thing myself this morning, and Mrs. Robeson told me it was possible I might come across you here and get your help in choosing some presents for my mother and sister."

"We shall be very glad to help you," Mrs. Barnes assured him, when she had expressed her pleasure at seeing him again, and Miss Gilbert and Miss Brown had also greeted him with the sort of demure cordiality appropriate to the place and the presence of the observing saleswoman. The saleswoman, by the way, had seen him all the time, lurking behind the kimonos, and had been hoping to get through with her present customers in time to wait upon the American gentleman. American gentlemen, from her point of view, were the most helpless customers who ever came into her hands, and she was always confident of selling them her most expensive goods to take home to their wives on the other side of the sea. She regretted that this victim had found these ladies to advise him. It would probably make considerable difference in the size of her bill-of-sale.

So now it was Lockwood who turned over piles of scarves and picked out the most elaborate of them upon which to get the others' opinions. He told Miss Gilbert that his sister's general colouring so nearly approached her own that it would be of the greatest assistance to him if he might clarify his ideas by occasionally laying a scarf across her shoulders, and standing off to view the effect. Miss Gilbert did not often allow him any extended opportunity to judge of such effect, usually twitching off the article in question after a very brief exhibition of it in juxtaposition to her cheek, whose colour now was of a singularly permanent character. It certainly would seem a simple matter for a young woman to help a bachelor of taste and discretion to select presents for his mother and sister. Yet, even Diantha, absorbed in her own difficult choosing, could not help noting that Mr. Lockwood seemed to be less interested in the hues of the Liberty silk than in that of the cheek he now and then got the chance to see above them.

But in the course of time the shopping was completed. They were all the possessors of parcels ordered sent to Gordon Square, for Lockwood professed himself anxious to have Mrs. Robeson see and approve his purchases along with those of the others. Then, having obtained

Mrs. Barnes's permission, he convoyed the whole party away to a place where he had already made careful arrangements for their comfort. There they found awaiting them an unexceptionable table in a secluded alcove, and a deferential waiter whose chief aim in life seemed to be to prove that his manner of serving a simple but choice luncheon could not be rivalled by any flourisher of a napkin in the unknown parts from which his party came.

Afterward Lockwood put the ladies into a four-wheeler and took them away to a small private exhibition of paintings by a few famous modern artists to which he had access, and for which he argued they might well abandon their original plan of continuing to shop throughout the afternoon. They found this wholly unexpected treat a somewhat rare one. That is to say, to be strictly honest, Mrs. Barnes and Diantha, having nothing to distract their attention, found it so. Miss Gilbert, lover of art though she was, and closely as she appeared to be following the explanations of the catalogue with which Lockwood supplied her—and to whose information he added considerable of his own—found it the most difficult task of her life to fix enough of the details of the pictures in her mind to be able to give an intelligent description of any of them afterward to

her friend Mrs. Robeson, should she be called upon to do so.

It cannot be denied that Mr. Lockwood's manner had become, for the first time in her acquaintance with him, distinctly disconcerting. Never before, for example, had she known his attention to swerve so abruptly and disconnectedly from the subject which chanced to be under discussion. If he had been a boy just out of college, instead of the somewhat accomplished conversationalist he had hitherto shown himself to be, he could hardly from time to time have broken in upon his own remarks with more surprisingly irrelevant observations.

Discussing the peculiar and unusual colouring in a certain landscape which he declared to have attracted much both favourable and unfavourable comment from the critics, he suddenly observed —"The tint of that sky toward the horizon strikes me as precisely like that scarf you bought at the last. Do you know, I can't help thinking I should like to see you in a whole gown of that colour?"

"Oh, dear me, no," she protested. "It would be like having a whole sky of that colour—overpowering."

"But whole skies often are of that colour—and are by no means overpowering. Look at that little jewel of an Italian water-scene over there."

"Yes, of course. But in that case the brilliancy of the whole colouring makes the sky only an adjunct. For an Italian water-scene it is perfect. As a frock on a woman——"

"I should like to see it, nevertheless," persisted Lockwood, with obstinacy. "A woman, if you will let me say it, doesn't necessarily need the dark and vivid colouring of an Italian to give all the effect of brilliancy."

He turned about upon the divan, where they sat in the centre of a small room at the end of a series, quite alone. Mrs. Barnes and Diantha had wandered back to an earlier point where they had found something provocative of much interest and discussion. Lockwood's gaze rested upon the attractive profile beside him, set off by a background of dull tints in a great gray landscape beyond it. Against this sombre-hued expanse Agnes's fresh bloom glowed richly, and for some time he studied it in silence.

She could hardly resent this, for, since she did not look at him, she could not have asserted that he was not regarding the gray landscape beyond her, to which, indeed, he had lately called her attention as peculiarly fine. Nevertheless she was intensely conscious that he was looking at her with an interest he had never shown so plainly before to-day. As she fixed her own gaze upon

the portrait of a royal personage on the wall before her, she felt, mingling with a feminine hope that no straying locks or loosening hairpins were spoiling the trim appearance which was her special characteristic, a little stirring sense of happiness which she was not willing to define.

Diantha, appearing noiselessly at a distant doorway, caught this decidedly "private view." Returning to Mrs. Barnes, she made no comment upon what she had seen except that their companions appeared to be still occupied with the end room. But within her friendly and loyal soul she said to herself, "There's certainly something new and odd about his manner to her. He was staring at her in such a boyish sort of way—like —like the way I've known Lin to stare at me when he thought I didn't know it. Of course she's never anything but perfectly self-possessed, but—well—I'm certain she doesn't know just what she's looking at herself this minute!"

CHAPTER XI

WHITE LILIES AND SCARLET SALVIA

MRS. ANTHONY ROBESON sat by a window getting off her semi-weekly letter to her husband. Having covered three pages with preliminaries of a sort not to be quoted in a history like this, her pen paused. Her glance wandered from the page before her out of window to the park in the centre of the square, showing a green expanse of tree foliage and shrubbery, with here and there a glimpse of well-kept lawn. In this enclosure, behind locked gates, Tony Junior and little Annette, in the care of their nurse, were happily employed in various sports which they were enjoying in the company of several other small American children who had foregathered there.

Turning away at length from a satisfactory survey of the group on the grass as it could be dimly discerned through breaks in the heavy intervening leafage, Juliet resumed her letter:

The children are really having a happier time here in the heart of London than I could have believed possible. All these sunshiny days they are out in the park, and come in with

ravenous appetites and sleep all night like tops. As for the rest of us, we are having just the sort of experience I knew would be inevitable, no matter how we were able to elude it in other places—a round of sight-seeing combined with other methods of diversion which, all together, fill our time more than full. Diantha shows a keen zest for everything, of course, and Louis Lockwood and Agnes have become interested in piloting her about over the ground they both know so well. Rachel and I take turns at playing duenna, a rôle which becomes more and more necessary as various Englishmen of Agnes's acquaintance appear from time to time, and offer us all sorts of opportunities we can't conscientiously miss. A Mr. Arthur Firth, an M. P., has been particularly attentive, and yesterday took us all to the House of Commons for a session he thought we should appreciate, because several distinguished members were to speak on the Education Bill. We had tea on the terrace afterward, and met two other very pleasant gentlemen, who proceeded at once, in their turn, to make plans for us. Englishmen are so thoroughly imbued with the idea that visiting Americans wish to fill every hour with sight-seeing, it is difficult to escape their kindly assistance in carrying out this order of things—although they heartily and frankly disapprove it themselves.

To-day, for example, a certain Professor Clegg, of Cambridge, has taken Rachel and Agnes on a literary pilgrimage to Hampstead Heath, filling his schedule of the day so full—as he planned it beforehand—that I felt obliged to protest. "But they won't want to miss any of it, you know," said he, politely. "I understand quite how they would feel about it afterward, if they should leave anything out." So they have gone prepared to live up to the popular idea of us. If he only knew it, Rachel is the most leisurely person in the world about looking at noteworthy scenes, and Agnes—well, I suspect that Agnes knows Hampstead Heath quite as well as he does! Still——

The door opened, and Diantha appeared. "I won't interrupt you," said she, "but I must

recover a little before I go over and play with the other children in the park. My encounter with the British Museum has completely exhausted me—for the moment."

Juliet laid down her pen and regarded her young friend critically. "You don't look exhausted. You look as if you had been having an exhilarating time. You didn't go alone, did you?"

"All alone—ran away. You were writing, and the others were off with the Professor. Agnes said I must do the Museum before we left London, and I protested. She was firm about it, and I thought if I got it over by myself I could spike her gun so when she aimed it at me and tried to hit me with a sense of duty to a great institution she would miss fire. It *is* great—I'll say that for it!"

"Did you attempt to see it all, at one visit?" inquired Juliet, with amusement.

"I have seen it all—every room. I walked in at the front door and straight through room after room—mile after mile—two solid floors of them. Policemen—or guards—I don't know what they call the people who stand about and eye you as you pass along to see that you don't try to carry off a mummy or the Rosetta Stone—they all looked at me in disgust. I'm certain no matter how fast they've seen American tourists 'do' the Museum, they never saw it 'done' faster than

to-day. I simply sprinted through, you know, just decently short of a run. And even then I thought I never should get through them all. It began to seem like a nightmare, walking on and on and ON and ON, and never coming to the end."

"I should think it might, if you didn't pause to look at anything."

"Oh, I did turn aside once in a while. I saw as much as a dozen things that interested me enough to make me walk up to them. But at last I got back to the entrance, and then I noticed a room I hadn't been in, over at the right. I went and looked in and saw a lot of autograph letters in cases. Such an interesting-looking girl was hanging over the one by the door I went and stood beside her and looked too. I was going to speak to her, but I saw something that made me forget her. It was—it was the last pages of General Gordon's diary, at Khartoum, just before the enemy got him. Broken off in the middle of a sentence—remember? I just looked and looked, till I couldn't see straight. He's—been one of my heroes—always."

Juliet remembered, as Diantha walked over to a window and stood gazing absently out, that on the Sunday before, after even-song at St. Paul's, it had been difficult to get the girl away from one spot—the memorial to the hero of Khartoum,

lying prone upon his marble sarcophagus, his noble profile outlined against the sombre wall beyond.

"He's a hero worth revering," agreed Juliet gently, for she saw that her charge really had entered deeply into the spirit of this one of the great events of history, and that the sight of the intrepid leader's own handwriting in that last tragic record had stirred in her deeper feeling than anything she had yet seen in London.

Juliet went on with her letter, presently, when Diantha had gone away over to the park to be welcomed with shouts of delight from the children, the sound of which floated across to their mother's open window and made her smile as she wrote:

The various tastes of our little party come out strongly in our sight-seeing. Agnes, very naturally, cares more for the literary memorials than any others. Rachel is interested in great statesmen—a reflection of Roger's political enthusiasms, no doubt. You know my predilection for the 'simple annals of the poor,' for Nature, and the country, and all the open-air joys. But Diantha's devotion to military causes, living and dead, puts all our ardours in the shade. At Westminster, while Agnes is worshipping in the Poets' Corner, Diantha is standing staring down at the stone in the floor, in the centre of the nave, under which lies David Livingstone—all but the brave heart they buried off there in Africa. Once, when there was nobody about, I saw the child take off her hat as she came to the place!

The other day Agnes got permission of somebody—or Mr. Firth got it for her—and took a bunch of lilies to the Abbey, to lay on the pavement just above the name of Robert Browning.

Without getting permission from anybody, Diantha bought a bunch of scarlet salvia at the same shop, and carried it with her to the Abbey. We all went with Agnes to do honour to Browning, but when the lilies were in place Diantha slipped away. We had chosen the early morning hour before the crowd comes, and there were only a few people in the place. Diantha was absent for some time, and when she came back at last the salvia was missing.

"I'm very much interested to know where those red flowers went—if I may," said Louis Lockwood, to Diantha, on the way home, when he noticed she was no longer carrying them. She shook her head and wouldn't tell him. But the next day I went back to the Abbey with Agnes, who wanted to verify certain dates, and as we wandered down the nave I caught a glimpse of scarlet, over in a dusky spot on the right. I said nothing to Agnes, but came back there when she was busy, and found the flowers, still quite fresh, under the tablet to Major André! I wonder if Lieutenant Lincoln Webb, of the U. S. A., wouldn't derive considerable satisfaction from these small incidents, if he knew of them. I'll venture to say, though that she doesn't write him about them. It wouldn't be like her. She doesn't seem to write to anybody very often, except "Uncle Ephraim." Letters from the Lieutenant's Western post, and from Dublin, arrive with regularity, but unless she is very sly about it, which I don't believe, I doubt if either young man gets as many of her favours in response as he would like.

Meanwhile—since I'm growing hopelessly gossipy—Louis Lockwood is devoting himself to Agnes with daily increasing zeal. He got us all invitations to the Independence Day reception given by the American Ambassador at Dorchester House. I begged off, so Rachel did the chaperoning, and Mr. Lockwood took the party, all looking very well dressed—as they always do. Diantha's account of the affair was much more amusing to me than going would have been, inasmuch as the afternoon, to do the occasion honour, turned out to be

almost as furiously hot as it probably was in America. The best frock I had with me for such uses was hardly thin enough for such unexpected weather.

Diantha's description of the attire and the actions of her compatriots, and their various fashions of shaking hands with the receiving party, put us all into hysterics, as we sat about our drawing-room afterward, in the cool of the early evening. Her caricature of her own style of procedure was funniest of all, though I received it with a grain of salt, for the child is always merciless on her own social performances, and insists that she is the most awkward creature who ever stumbled over her own skirts at critical moments. Nevertheless, she is a picture worth looking at in those same unhappy moments. Whatever she does she is the prettiest thing on this side of the Atlantic, and has a way of retrieving her own errors by such charming smiles and blushes nobody could ever think her half so "wild-mannered" as she insists on calling herself.

The best thing about their going to the Ambassador's was their unexpected meeting there with our Virginia-Torquay friend, Mr. Joseph Wilton. He is here for a fortnight before sailing for home, much improved in health; and is delighted to offer his services as assistant cavalier, though he is not much more familiar with London than I am. Since all the other devoted squires have their eyes upon our girls, it is a matter of relief to Rachel and me to have one rather more elderly attendant, and we are making the most of Mr. Wilton's stay. He——

"Dear, dear, dearest Mrs. Robeson!" cried Diantha Brown, once more bursting in upon the letter to Anthony. "That perfect brick of a Mr. Wilton is here with a great, big, gorgeous motor-car, and an awfully intelligent looking chauffeur, and he's going to take us all over everywhere.

beginning with the Thames Embankment and ending with St. Pancras Station. He says that he and Mr. Lockwood have arranged with Professor Clegg to meet him and Mrs. Barnes and Agnes on their way back from the dead-authors trip, and take us all to some funny, famous old place to dine—I forget the name—but it's some sort of Cheese, I think! Isn't he a dear? Oh, please, put down that letter! You've written reams!"

So the letter ended rather abruptly with a brief explanation of the quite irresistible nature of the interruption, and this comforting concluding paragraph:

On Tuesday Diantha and I are going on alone up to the Lake Region, to find the house where we hope to be established when you and Roger come. Tony—Tony, that's only a few weeks ahead, now—only a few!

Hours afterward, at the quaint, old-time tavern off Fleet Street which Mr. Wilton had chosen in which to entertain his friends, the party upon sitting down at their table had occasion to admire the decorations for whose character, however, they were not able to find out who was responsible. A bed of white lilies, surrounded by a nodding border of scarlet salvia, flanked by small American flags, was a sufficiently striking centrepiece to call for the recognition of those in whose honour

it had been devised. But Mr. Wilton denied all previous knowledge of it, and said it was undoubtedly a conceit of the innkeepers and waiters. Diantha and Agnes, incredulous—having seen both innkeeper and waiters—together gazed at Lockwood. They had been told that he had suggested the place to their host as a desirable one in which to give his feast a flavour of great days gone by, and they very naturally suspected him. But he assumed so innocent and inscrutable an expression that it was impossible to make sure; neither were they able to obtain from him any acknowledgment of participation in the matter.

When the party went away they carried with them both flags and flowers. In the girls' own room, as they made ready for sleep, Diantha paused in front of a little cluster of the small silken ensigns, arranged by Agnes on the chimney-piece. She laid one hand on her heart and lifted the other solemnly in the air.

"'My country—may she always be right!'" she breathed; "'But—right or wrong—*my country!*'"

CHAPTER XII

JULIET LEASES A FARM

"NOW," said Mrs. Anthony Robeson, standing upon the steps of The Belsfield, in the little lakeside village of Bowness-on-Windermere, "the town is all before us where to choose. And the choice is the most important one of our whole stay in England. Where, now, is the ideal spot in which to make a home to welcome Doctor Barnes and Mr. Robeson? Wherever it is, Di, we must find it!"

"If Mr. Robeson could see you," answered Diantha, with an admiring look at her friend, "he could never wait another month to come. Never, never did I see the mother of a son as old as Tony Junior look so like a girl as you. Nobody takes you for my chaperon. But I can't blame them. Just now you appear about nineteen!"

"Happiness," explained Juliet. "I think I never was so happy in my life as I am this lovely summer morning. We've done it all, lived in hotels, boarding-houses and apartments, and now we're going to keep house. To keep house for

the men we love—there's nothing that's such fun in the world."

"I should think not—the way you do it. But do you suppose you can do it over here?"

"I will, if I have to buy a house to do it in. Here comes our carriage. Now, first for the agency, and some addresses."

"This is a dear little old town," said Diantha, as they drove away in the small and shabby victoria, driven by an interested driver whose tall beaver made up for other deficiencies in his livery, "much prettier than Coniston, or Ambleside, or Windermere, or any of the places we came through. There's just life enough about it to redeem it from dulness, and yet one can get right away into the hills, or off on the lake. Your men can't help liking it. How did you come to pick it out?"

"Doctor Barnes suggested it, among several others. Some London people confirmed the choice, and our instinct for a suitable locality did the rest."

At the small agency Mrs. Robeson obtained her addresses, and a few minutes later she and Diantha were exploring the first on the list.

"Too small, too ugly in its furnishings, and too near the centre of things," was Juliet's verdict, and they hastened away to the second. Her

comments upon this were much the same. The third had no garden, the fourth no view, the windows of the fifth were heavily obscured by vines, and the sixth was in an uninviting neighbourhood. Juliet drove back to the agency.

"I'm afraid," she said, to the very obliging young man who waited upon her, "that I didn't give you a quite clear enough description of my needs. I must have a view of the lake and mountains, a garden, plenty of light in the house, everything well kept, and all neither too near nor too far from the town. I'm sure you must have just that house—please give me the address."

The agent smiled, glancing from the one attractive face to the other. "Perhaps it would have been better for the older ladies of your party to have come to look up the house," said he. "Ladies who have kept house know that it's a bit difficult to find everything in one, and they might be quite well satisfied with some of those you have rejected. The one, now, that I put first on the list—it's considered very desirable, that. A rich gentleman from Manchester had it last year and would have taken it again if it hadn't been that he wanted to go elsewhere. Are you sure you hadn't better ask the other ladies of your party to have a look at the place?"

"The otner ladies of my party," replied Mrs

Robeson, drawing up her pretty figure to its most imposing height and speaking with dignity, while Diantha walked away to the window and became absorbed in the view, "are in London. I am here to select the house. If you have anything you have not shown us, further out of town, and more desirable than anything we have found on this list, I should be glad to look at it. Otherwise, we will set out upon our chance of finding something for ourselves."

The agent became impressed, for there was now a note of polite imperiousness in his patron's voice which warned him that he was making a mistake in treating these young persons as not knowing what they wanted.

"If you would care to look at anything in the way of a farm"—he hesitated, producing a book filled with photographs.

"That is precisely what I should like to look at," said the supposed daughter of the unknown American family who wanted everything in one. So she was given a fresh address, and she and Diantha were driven briskly away upon the lake road toward Ambleside.

The farm was found, a picturesque place with a fine view, a lawn and garden, a whitewashed stone house with rose-vines climbing all over it, and various farm buildings behind. Mrs. Robeson

and Diantha were shown over it, and came downstairs at last casting slyly delighted glances at each other.

"Such dear, funny bedrooms," whispered Diantha, as the maid who had taken them over the house in the absence of the mistress, who was making butter in some remote region, went to ask that person her terms.

"A trifle small, but so quaint we could put up with their size. The lower rooms are very good, and the outside certainly is the sort of thing one sees and adores in pictures of English country life," responded Juliet. "I should love to live in such a place. If I could only get permission to make a clean sweep of the seventeen cheap vases on that chimney-piece——"

"Oh, I'd smash them all for you, and cheerfully pay the bill myself. The biggest of them didn't cost a shilling, and the little ones must have been tuppence a pair. What fun to aim a stone at one after another, till they were all gone!"

"The house is clean, isn't it?"

"Perfectly. And the outside is heavenly. I can just see Mr. Robeson walking up and down the grass at the edge of the garden, smoking, and Doctor Barnes lounging on that queer little wooden seat outside the door."

Juliet went to the door and looked out, as

if she hoped to see the vision Diantha had called up.

"I am very much tempted to take it," she mused.

Diantha came to her side. "Think what a lovely place to take photographs of and send home to one's envious friends," she suggested. "It looks like a stage-scene, with all those roses, and the garden, and the great trees, and that stone wall all covered with ivy. I'll take that little room at the back—I'll be glad to, for the sake of living in such a place. I don't believe the rent will be high, for with no bathroom and such a tiny kitchen they can't expect to get town rates."

"If I could be sure that Mrs. Barnes would be quite comfortable in a bed with no springs——"

"It had a feather bed at the top."

"That's not exactly a compensation. Do you think we could all get about the table?"

"Oh, we'd have our meals half the time outdoors, shouldn't we?"

"When it doesn't rain—which it's liable to do, a week on end, when it once begins, with showers at any time. Of course, one must remember we shall be quite a party, particularly if Mr. Lockwood joins us, as he's likely to do, I think. The days when we're shut in—shouldn't we be rather crowded?"

"Could you ever make up your mind to leave

this delicious place on account of our filling the sitting-room 'full up,' as they say over here? Why, on the rainy days our men will all be away fishing."

"She's coming. . . . I believe I shall take it, if she can put up an extra bed or two for the children."

The maid reappeared. "Mrs. Davey says the house'll be eight guineas the week, 'm. But she says it's booked through till October. There's a party coming to-night, 'm—a party just went out this morning."

Juliet and Diantha hastily resought their carriage. On the way they exchanged a hurried colloquy.

"Isn't it too provoking to miss such a lovely place?"

"Why on earth didn't she tell us at first it was engaged?"

"Showing us all over it, as if it were free as air to the first comer!"

"Eight guineas is a frightful price for such a small house."

"She'd have come down from that. That was her American price. When you pointed out that there was no bathroom——"

"She'd have pointed to the view."

"That *was* a view—a heavenly view! And the roses——"

"They were at their last. In a week more they will be gone!"

"The bedrooms were dreadfully small."

"And what should I have done without a bathroom for the children? Filling tin tubs is so unsatisfactory."

"There's all Windermere, just at the foot of the garden."

"Too cold for bathing."

"Oh, well—perhaps it's just as well we couldn't have it. But here we are—a whole morning's work, and nothing accomplished."

"We'll find something this afternoon," asserted Juliet, confidently.

But the afternoon brought nothing more satisfactory. They drove up to Windermere, although since that village lies a mile back from the lake Juliet had not considered it as satisfactory a place as Bowness for establishing a party with varied tastes. In the afternoon sunlight the little town, charming though it was, presented a sleepy aspect which did not invite the visitor seeking to find in his temporary home not only quiet but the possibilities of liveliness. But there was nothing available here either, and the two drove back to Bowness in time for dinner, feeling baffled and disappointed.

"We could, of course, come down to living on

the apartment plan again," said Diantha. "Should you be so very sorry to do that? I saw some delightful looking places."

"We shall live in apartments in Edinburgh, from necessity. But I do want to be keeping house here when our men come. It's been one of my dreams to keep house in England and I shall not give up yet. I'll search for a week if necessary. There must be something!"

But it seemed that there was not. On the evening of the second day it looked as if Mrs. Robeson must abandon her cherished plan, as far as this place was concerned. On the third day she and Diantha went by boat to Ambleside, further along the lake shore, but thought the place less desirable and found nothing sufficiently attractive to cause them to give up Bowness. The situation of this little village seemed peculiarly fortunate, lying as it does with its foot at the lake and its head among the beautiful Westmoreland hills.

"Let's abandon the carriage and that stupid driver who doesn't seem to know a thing about his own town, and wander off on some of these by-ways up on the hill," suggested Diantha. "Who knows what we may come upon, tucked away behind stone walls and hedges?"

So they went to walk, in the late afternoon of the fourth day. Diantha led the way, and Juliet,

less weary than crestfallen at the defeat of a plan which grew the dearer to her as it seemed to become impracticable, followed rather aimlessly, trying to rejoice in the beauty of the scene all about her, and to keep hold of that high spirit which had thus far carried her indefatigably through all the trials of the long search. She was never easily daunted, but the four months' absence from Anthony was beginning to seem unending, and she had counted upon the diversion of getting established in housekeeping to shorten the period remaining.

Diantha had chosen to lead the expedition in the only direction in which their researches had not yet taken them, straight up the hill which lies back of the town. Beyond a few scattered private residences at which they looked longingly but without hope, the course promised nothing in the way of farm or other houses available for their party. The view to be obtained from the park-like fields at the side and summit of the hill was well worth the climb, however, and Juliet drew a long breath of pleasure as she attained a position where the town lay at her feet. From this point the lake showed nearly its whole winding length, set among blue and purple hills, the more distant of which presented the faint but rugged outlines of the mountains which enclose the region.

"Let's sit down on this stone seat," she proposed, "and forget our troubles. There's probably nothing up here to tempt us to a search, but there's beauty enough to make up."

"Isn't it delightful of the rich people who own the estate to throw it open like this to wayfarers?" Diantha glanced toward various wide and well-kept paths leading in divers directions over the hillside. "Those gates over there are not closed against us at all. We can go through that queer little turnstile at the side, and keep on through a lovely stretch of country. Down in Devon every gate I came to was padlocked, but the driver we had to-day told me there are acres up here and off over behind the hill, entirely free to the public, so long as the right isn't abused. It's almost like owning a great park one's self."

"This will be a safe and pleasant place for Tony and Nan to come with Nurse," said Juliet, "if only we can find a home for them. But if we don't come upon anything to-morrow I shall feel we have exhausted the resources of the place, and shall think of going on to Grasmere or Keswick."

"They get more rain over that way—the driver said so—and that would be superfluous, if the travellers' tales of Westmoreland are true. Isn't it lovely we've had such perfect weather so far?

House-hunting in the rain would have dampened our ardour even more than failure."

"So it would. Di, let's sit here a little, and then follow that pretty path back over the hill a bit. It looks to me as if it might lead to something."

"Shall I run back and see, while you rest?"

"No, thank you—I want to go too. If there is anything I must find it myself. Come—perhaps there is, and it's just been waiting for us to find it."

"You plucky, sweet thing, no wonder your husband adores you," thought Diantha, following her friend. She declared afterward that she thought Mrs. Robeson must have been suddenly inspired, for as if she had known the way thither Juliet walked straight along a certain path, ignoring various alluring turns to right and left, toward the place where the path disappeared behind a great clump of larches. No sign of smoke, no hint of a habitation was there to lead her feet that way. But she went hurriedly on, rounded the bend in the path, and came upon a small rustic gateway, hung with vines, beyond which could be caught a glimpse of a garden. Still no house showed, but at a second gateway just beyond, opening into a field, a horse's head looked over a stone wall and the animal whinnied as the two approached.

Juliet stopped to pat the beseeching brown nose; then opened the rustic gate, set out upon a box-bordered path which appeared to lead definitely somewhere, and pursued it in its winding way through masses of shrubbery until it came quite unexpectedly out upon a small terrace in front of a low and rambling house.

"Goodness, we've got into somebody's private grounds," whispered Diantha, preparing to draw back. But Juliet stopped short, gazing closely at the house.

"Di, it's not occupied. See how the curtains are pinned back from the windows, and the furniture gathered in the centre of the rooms. I suspected it when I saw the weeds in the path. Oh, Di—Di—what a home-y place!"

"Perfectly dear—or would be with the weeds pulled out, the curtains unpinned, and you standing in the doorway. How do you suppose we can find out about it?"

"We'll explore," and Juliet eagerly crossed the small terrace, ran up half-a-dozen steps at its side, and disappeared around the corner of the house. Diantha lingered to look longingly at the front of the cottage, for though of a fair size and evidently the dwelling of people of means, it was of simple design and undoubtedly a century or more old. Ivy and honeysuckle climbed luxuriantly over its low

front, great English oaks shaded either side of the terrace, and a flowery but untended garden lay in front. As she looked that way Diantha noted that the house, though set in a sheltered dip in the top of the hillside, yet looked out through a long vista over the lake toward the mountains, a vista which entirely avoided, in the characteristic fashion of the English home, any encounter with the public highway.

Diantha in her turn now walked up the wooden terrace-steps, the rail on either side hung with vines, and followed her companion's footsteps. She caught the sound of voices, and soon discovered her friend in conversation with a plump woman who had come out of a small house beyond an intervening hedge. This person was saying in answer to Juliet's questioning that the house was owned by some Birmingham gentlemen who usually came up for the shooting. But this year they had gone to "the States," and had written her to let the house if she could. Thus far it had not been let because everybody thought the hill too steep a one to climp afoot, or the house not big enough, or the stable accommodations unsuitable for those who wished to bring their horses with them. As for motor cars, the road was nearly impassable for them. Would the ladies 'ave a fancy to go through the 'ouse, 'm ?

The ladies most enthusiastically would, though they strove to keep their delighted faces demurely sober, and not to look as if it mattered to them that the house, as they progressed through it, was going straight to their hearts. It became evident that the Birmingham gentlemen, whoever they were, had ordered the furnishing of their summer home, or shooting-box, or whatever they were pleased to call it, after a simple fashion of good taste; and while it contained nothing superfluous, it possessed everything necessary to comfort and even to a sense of luxury. The walls of the rooms were hung with attractive English papers, mostly in chintz patterns; the window draperies were of a sort to harmonise; the floors were stained and waxed, and rugs were seen in bales, all about, for the house had been carefully put into the proper condition for disuse. The breakfast-room was furnished with a stock of serviceable but not inartistic china; the drawing-room, upon the upper floor, possessed four large windows in a row, with a window seat and a magnificent view.

Juliet's arm received pinch after pinch as she and Diantha explored the house—a particularly emphatic one at the sight of a good-sized bath-room boasting not only a big porcelain tub but also a small fireplace. A final congratulatory signal reached Mrs. Robeson's consciousness as

they were shown into a stone-floored kitchen with built-in range of the English country-house pattern, like the one they had seen in the house by the windmill at Torquay.

Juliet stood in front of a tall dresser, at the side of this spotlessly kept old kitchen, and surveyed its rows of blue-and-white table ware, each article set forth in its own place. Her imagination leaped at the thought of keeping house here. At the moment it mattered very little to her whether she would succeed in finding suitable English maid-servants to cook for her and serve her or not. She was longing to take hold of those well-scoured copper saucepans for herself, and concoct certain dishes which she had not set eyes upon since she had crossed the water, but whose absence from the board she had heard mourned many times during the last four months.

"What would be the rent for this place, just as it is, for six weeks or two months?" she inquired, dreading to put the question lest the rate be too high for her resources, which though ample did not admit of extravagance.

"Five guineas the week, 'm," was the reply, "and a little off if you was to take it by the month. It would be 'igher, but it's getting a bit late to let it for the season, and the gentlemen said I was to put it down to five guineas, in case there was

responsible people wanting it. You see, 'm, it's better for the 'ouse not to stand idle the 'ole twelvemonth, it not being occupied all winter."

"Much better," agreed Juliet, finding it extraordinarily difficult, with Diantha going through all sorts of demonstrations of ecstasy behind the caretaker's back, to keep her own manner sufficiently business-like and dignified, and see the details of arrangement through without betraying the fact that she found the price eminently satisfactory.

"If we should take it, the chief question would be where to find a good cook," said she, and explained how large a party they were to be. The caretaker's face grew radiant. "If you would wish to try what I could do for you," she offered, "I'd do my best to suit you. To be sure my 'usband and I've the care of the farm, but my sister's with me, and the work isn't 'eavy now, 'aying being past. It would 'ave the advantage for you, 'm, that I shouldn't 'ave to live in the 'ouse, being so near—and there being only six sleeping rooms here, you'd be wanting them all."

"I should be very glad to try you," agreed Juliet, gladly, "and as I like very much to come into the kitchen and make certain dishes myself, we should probably manage nicely. How soon could you have the house in order so that I could send for my party?"

"The 'ouse 'as all been cleaned, 'm, within the fortnight, the Birmingham gentlemen being very particular how things is kept up. I should say a couple of days, 'm, I could 'ave the rooms ready. I've orders, if I let the place, to 'ave the gardener come out and put the gardens and paths in order. 'E'll put salt on the weeds in the terrace, and soon 'ave it cleaned for you."

"You may send for him," said the American lady promptly, quite taking the English farmwife's breath away by the readiness with which she had arrived at a decision. "And please air all the beds in the sun, and the linen, too. The linen goes with the house, I think you said?"

"Oh, yes, 'm. And as for airing the beds, I'd never think of not doing that. They're very fine beds, too, I think you'll find. The Birmingham gentlemen are very particular, 'm, in the matter of beds."

Juliet now proceeded to inquire about the details of marketing, at a place so high above, if not in point of distance far away from, the Bowness markets. She learned that the farm itself supplied most of the vegetables ("cauliflower," said Diantha's lips dumbly, as her eyes met Juliet's) and much of the fruit. The butcher's and the fishmonger's carts would come regularly to the door, if desired, and milk and butter were at hand,

of the best, according to Mrs. Weldart's modestly proud assertion.

"The Birmingham gentlemen are most particular, 'm, about their milk and butter," quoth she, "and we'd soon 'ear of it if they wasn't of the proper quality."

"It's terribly lucky for us," declared Diantha, as they walked slowly away at last, turning to gaze back upon their new possession, lit into a quite glorified attractiveness by the rays of the late afternoon sun which had just found their way under the drooping branches of the oaks, "that the Birmingham gentlemen are so remarkably particular. Their being so fussy about the way things is kept up, and the beds, and the butter and milk, 'm, makes it quite safe for us to come after them. . . . Oh, look—did you see *this* little gate, on the other side of the garden? It leads over into that lovely green field, so the field is ours, too. What a place for Ann and Tony, all to themselves. Mrs. Robeson!—Mrs. Robeson!—aren't you happy?"

"So happy I can hardly believe in our good-fortune, Di. I'm positively glad we had all those trying experiences. They make this find seem all the bigger."

"Think of that other farm we wanted so," exulted Diantha. "Those stuffy little bedrooms

that we tried to think were all right, because it was so pretty outside!"

"And those seventeen vases in the sitting-room!"

"And the tiny table that we never could have all got round!"

"The view wasn't any finer than this!"

"Not half so fine, because that was down near the lakeside, and this is well up on the hills. The air must be much more bracing up here—don't you notice it?"

"I seem to be immensely braced since we sat on that stone seat feeling much gloomier than we dared confess."

"So do I. It may be the air, it may be the delightful pattern of the wall-paper in the room you said Agnes and I should have, it may be the Birmingham gentlemen, but it's *there*. . . . How can we ever wait two days till we get into that house? Oh, Mrs. Robeson, *what* will Mr. Robeson say when he sees it?"

Juliet smiled, turning her head away as she fastened the rustic gate behind her. Wherever he might find her, there could be no doubt about what Anthony would say.

CHAPTER XIII

AT WHICH ANTHONY ARRIVES FROM OVER SEA

ON THE deck of an incoming Atlantic liner making its way to its Liverpool dock, two passengers stood by the rail discussing a matter of moment. It was the question whether, upon telegraphing to a certain address in Westmoreland the docking of their steamer, they should add the hour of their probable arrival there.

"If we do," said Roger Barnes, "we shall have them all at the Bowness pier to meet us—or better yet, at the Lakeside station at the foot of Windermere. It strikes me that it's extremely desirable to bring about a meeting at the earliest possible moment."

He looked, as he spoke, so graphic an illustration of the man who goes to meet a person much beloved from whom he has been too long separated, that Robeson smiled in sympathy. But the latter continued to press his view of the case.

"At the risk of being considered tremendously sentimental," said he, "I must confess that I would rather put off seeing my little family till I can see them quite by themselves. A meeting

in a crowded railway station, and a trip up the lake on an equally crowded steamer, the centre of observation, not only because we are so patently a party reunited after separation, but because we are Americans and therefore fair game for all eyes—well—it doesn't seem to me the ideal thing. Come—you know it isn't! Let's walk in upon them in this Paradise they claim they've found, and devour them on the spot. Jove—but four months is a small eternity, and it's ten thousand miles further across the Atlantic than it was when I was a boy!"

"It has been a slow crossing," agreed Barnes, recalling his own daily anxious scanning of the ship's chart and his disappointment at finding that high seas and thick weather had prevented the making of the usual day's run, "and we're fully nineteen hours overdue. Well—have it your own way. I presume I can wait."

"Wait—man? You'll have less waiting on my plan than on yours," asserted Anthony, laughing happily. "Besides, I've a notion they'd prefer my way themselves. I'll go to the purser's office and get the despatch ready, and not mention which route we're taking. You can bank on their being ready for us, at any hour."

"Not much doubt of that," and Barnes pulled his wife's last letter out of his pocket, already

perceptibly worn with frequent perusal all the way across the water.

It seemed an interminable distance from Liverpool to Lakeside-on-Windermere, although the journey occupied but a few hours. On arrival at that small station, as they hurried across the pier to the little steamer whose loud toots warned them that she was in a hurry to be off, Barnes was muttering: "We might have had them right here, now, but for your infernal notion that you must have the stage set with a cottage to the right, a flower-garden to the left, and an effective entrance at the middle-back through a winding lane."

Robeson laughed. "This would have been a charming place in which to embrace your Rachel, wouldn't it?" he retorted in the other's ear, as they pushed their way upon the overcrowded boat with a holiday "excursion" crowd, whose conspicuous features were lunch-baskets, babies, and bedraggled women. "Can't find a place to sit, even at the first-class end of the boat."

"It's about a three-quarter-hour trip, if I remember—I beg your pardon, Madam, but I should prefer not to have you sit on that hat-box," and Barnes hastily rescued a portion of his luggage from being commandeered by a stout woman with an exceedingly red face. He next employed

himself in the attempt to get out of range of a shower of very black cinders which were pouring down from the diminutive smoke-stack above him, and in flirting his handkerchief about his shoulders in his endeavour to preserve the immaculate condition of the trig summer clothes he wore. He presently removed himself from the immediate vicinity of an infant-in-arms consuming an over-ripe banana, backed precipitately away from a party of workingmen dressed in their holiday clothes, smoking an incredibly powerful mixture in black clay-pipes, and finally cut short the inquiries of an inquisitive fellow-countryman who had begun the acquaintance by inquiring where he might be going and how long he intended to stay.

"Confound these cheap excursions!" he growled. "What do they mean by meeting a regular train and an excursion with one and the same insufficient boat? Windermere boasts plenty of good steamers, if I remember."

"You'll forget your troubles very soon, now," prophesied his friend, interestedly scanning the shores, as the small boat passed them rapidly by. "Juliet wrote that they were on the hills behind Bowness. According to that, they must be in this direction somewhere. We shall soon see, for a man at my elbow says Bowness is around

the next bend in the lake. Fix your eyes on the probable spot, and try to fancy how it's going to look."

When the steamer touched the Bowness pier, it was impossible not to search the waiting pier-full of people with intent gaze, on the possibility that Rachel and Juliet might be meeting every boat that day. But to Barnes's disappointment and Robeson's relief, no familiar face was to be seen.

"Brantfell Road? It'll be right up from the centre of the town, sir—you can't miss it. Keep straight up, if you're going to Brantfell Farm—through three gates, and then bend to your right. It's a fine view you get from the top of the 'ill."

"A fine view indeed," observed Anthony, striding away up the steep hill at a great pace, with which his friend, however, found no difficulty in keeping up. "A fine view it must be, if it contains the features we're expecting. Well—well—they've certainly not been afraid of a stiff climb. Rachel can be no feeble convalescent now, my boy, if she essays this walk every day."

"Hardly. She'd gained thirty pounds in all at the last writing, which must have put her about back where she belongs. She was beginning to be afraid she might get on a shade too much, but we'll take care of that if she does. 'Past three gates'—eh? This must be the first, then."

"And that's the second." Anthony pointed up the path, which leaving the road led straight up across a steep green field to a stone wall, beyond which lay what looked like a rural sort of park. The two men quickened their pace, springing up the abrupt ascent with the ardour of those whose goal is nearly won.

"There's a magnificent view behind us," remarked Anthony, as they pushed through the second gate. "But no matter. Don't take time to look at it!"

"Thank you—I won't," returned Barnes, putting on still more steam as away beyond and above the pleasant park he descried signs of a third gate. "Man, I believe you were right after all in prolonging the agony. I feel like a boy running a two-mile course for a prize."

The other laughed, conscious of the rapid beat of his own pulses, an effect not produced altogether by the haste of the ascent.

"'The third gate—then turn to the right.' That's it, Roger! There's a clump of trees, and smoke behind it! Come on—come on!"

"If you want to produce your stage effect, you should stop to cool down a bit, and not rush upon the scene panting like a porpoise." As he spoke, however, the doctor did not perceptibly lessen his own rate of progress.

"There's a small gate leading into a field—that can't be it, can it?" queried Anthony, observing the inconspicuous entrance to the children's pleasure ground, the field which lay in front of the unseen house and garden. But, as he spoke, all doubt as to where the gate might lead was settled beyond question by the abrupt appearance upon the little winding path above it of a sturdy young figure in holland knickerbockers, with bare sun-tanned legs.

Tony Junior, seeing figures upon the path below him, advanced to the gate, cast one look through its pickets, and flung it open with a rapturous shout. The next instant Anthony Robeson had his hungry arms filled, and it was an even question whether he or his son was doing the greater portion of the 'devouring' he had threatened.

"Keep quiet, you two," cautioned Barnes, when he in his turn had received an enthusiastic welcome from the little lad, "and we'll come in upon them before they suspect we're here. Where are they, Tony?"

"Nurse just took Ann in to give her a bath and put her to bed. Mother thought maybe you'd come on the Windermere train that gets in at seven—and she's going to have dinner for you."

"Good—they thought we'd come the other way —we're an hour ahead of them. Are they out-

doors or in?" Anthony was not delaying as he asked these questions, but was following Tony's lead, the youngster's brown hand clasped in his. Tony was leading the newcomers through the small gate and up into the field.

"That's our house, over there, past the garden," he pointed out, eagerly. "There's Mrs. Barnes, reading, in front."

Roger Barnes sprang ahead of the others, and came to the last gate which lay between him and Rachel. At the sound of the voices she looked up, sprang to her feet, and with a low cry ran across the little stretch of lawn straight into his open arms. In the moment's interval, as he came toward her, he saw that the four months had done their perfect work, and that his wife was her old, radiant self once more.

"Where is she?" whispered Anthony, shaking hands fervently, Roger having reluctantly resigned Rachel long enough to permit the salutation.

"She's in the kitchen, I think,"—Rachel pointed through the open door down the wide centre-hall of the house—"looking after a dinner to welcome you. The girls are off getting flowers to decorate the table in your honour."

"Stay here a moment, Tony." Anthony deposited his son upon the doorstep and took possession of the house. He hastened through it

guided by a faint, delicious odour of cookery, toward the regions in the rear whence it came. He did not know what he was to find—perhaps Juliet would be surrounded by servants preparing the meal under her superintendence, and it would have been better to let Tony summon her. But one thing was certain—he could wait no longer for any setting of the stage. He laid hands upon the door at the end of a small rear hallway which he guessed must lead to the kitchen, and gently pushed it open.

The good Mrs. Weldart—accomplished in the cooking of mutton and the boiling of cauliflower, an able compounder of Yorkshire pudding and invariably successful in the building of the foundations of a dinner—yet had her limitations. Of many a delectable dish she had not the remotest notion, until shown the subtle processes of its concoction by the skilful lady who had become her mistress. Mrs. Weldart had at first accepted the innovation of that mistress's inroads into her kitchen with displeasure—an emotion which changed to tolerance as she learned that such visits were attended by no increased inconvenience to herself, nor by any supercilious instruction. It still passed her comprehension why a lady of the evident standing of Mrs. Robeson should care to roughen her pretty hands with the affairs of the

kitchen. But since it was so, and since she herself had shared many a savoury meal in consequence, she had come to look with considerable awe upon her mistress's arts, and to suffer their pursuit without visible signs of reluctance.

On the present occasion she had been reduced to a state of demoralisation by beholding the preparations for the reception of the gentlemen whose arrival, she had been given to understand, was imminent. She had meekly assisted Mrs. Robeson through a series of experiences quite new to her, and had become so unwontedly flurried during the latest of them that only a minute or so before Anthony flung open the kitchen door she had accidentally, and by reason of her confusion of mind, upset a saucepan of cream-sauce upon the front of her dress and apron. She had precipitately apologised for the occurrence, and had hastily retired to her own cottage, beyond the rear hedge, to repair damages.

It thus happily came about that Juliet was, for the time, quite alone in the pleasant stone-floored kitchen, the red fire in the old range giving a picturesque touch to the scene. She herself, though daintily dressed in the frock in which she meant to receive Anthony, had put on over it one of her own particular blue linen pinafores, which enveloped her from head to foot. Her shapely

white arms were bared to the elbow, the sleeves cunningly pinned back out of harm's way; her sunny hair, piled upon the top of her head, had, as was its wont, various little escaping tendrils of curls at forehead and nape of neck. As the frock she wore was of a slightly low cut about the throat, the back of that same neck, as it was revealed to Anthony's gaze—Juliet being at the moment busy at a table with her back toward the door—presented a sufficiently characteristic and engaging appearance to make his heart leap in his breast.

He stood still, waiting. Juliet turned about to glance at a clock upon a shelf, and her eyes fell upon the figure in the doorway—the same figure which had stood waving and smiling at her from the pier four months ago. For one breathless instant she was motionless. Then Anthony held out his arms.

There was not a word spoken in the old kitchen for an interval of time during which the ancient clock solemnly ticked out a goodly number of seconds. Then Anthony gently lifted the head buried in his shoulder.

"Are you so glad, darling?" he asked, softly. "But you're not so glad as I—you couldn't be!"

"Couldn't I?" The tightening pressure of her arms spoke volumes.

"Stand off, Julie, and let me look at you."

"In the old days, you know, it was I who was tremendously in love. You merely submitted."

Looking up into his face, bright and moved with feeling, Juliet murmured: "Those days are long past."

"So they are. And I'm not less but more in love with my wife—which seems superfluous, but isn't. Stand off, Julie, and let me look at you."

She remembered all at once where she was, and the probable return of Mrs. Weldart at any moment, and led him away from the kitchen to regions more appropriate for the first expressions of the joy of reunion. Here Anthony himself unbuttoned the blue pinafore and took it off, unpinned the delicate sleeves of the muslin frock and rolled them down, first stooping to kiss each firm-fleshed arm. Then he held his wife off and looked at her.

"By all that's astonishing," he remarked in a tone of gratification, "you look more like twenty-one than ever. Are you never going to grow old, child? Look at your husband—closely, across the top of his head."

With an exclamation she drew the head down and turned it toward the light. Surely enough, with the thick brown locks mingled enough of gray to show perceptibly.

"My blessed boy!" she cried, and kissed the lock which swept lowest above his brow. "You

have been working hard! There were only two or three gray threads when I went away."

"I had to work hard," he avowed, laughing, and catching her close again, "or I should never have stayed away so long. With each ship that sailed came a fresh temptation to break away and take you by surprise."

"It makes you look wonderfully distinguished," she reflected, still eyeing the powdered thatch.

"Does it? That's lucky. Nothing can make me look too distinguished for the husband of the sweetest woman in the world."

"Tony!—all these compliments—and you haven't seen the children. Come—Nurse is putting Ann to bed for me to-night, because I wanted to see to your dinner. Tony's outdoors somewhere."

"I've seen my boy. Now that you mention it, I believe I can take time to look at my girl."

"Wait, I'll get her," and Juliet left him. In a minute she returned, bearing a rosy, curly-headed child in a white nightgown, her head upon her mother's shoulder, her eyes heavy with slumber.

At this moment Tony Junior himself tumbled into the room, unable to keep away longer from the father he adored and had missed with all his childish heart. Sitting down in the nearest chair Anthony took his small daughter in his arms,

gently kissed her into wakefulness and recognition, and then sat holding the pair, one on either knee, giving and receiving felicitations on the delights of reunion. But his eyes still sought his wife's, and at a certain supreme moment when Annette was planting kisses upon one cheek, Tony upon the other, it was Juliet, kneeling before the group, to whom he spoke.

"Good Lord!" was his heartfelt ejaculation. "How in the light of all the ages did I ever stand it so long without you?"

"Tony," observed Juliet, with great distinctness, "I shall never, never again agree to a separation half the length of this."

"In that affirmation," he rejoined, with a meaning look, "you are not alone. I assure you with all the positiveness of which I am capable—neither shall I!"

CHAPTER XIV

MOONLIGHT PHILOSOPHY

"FOR ten years," observed Anthony Robeson, lying comfortably back in one of the low wicker chairs which were accustomed to furnish the terrace—when they had not to be precipitately removed within to avoid a passing shower, "I've been under the impression that home meant a certain old-fashioned house on the other side of the Atlantic. But within the last twenty-four hours I have been forced to the conclusion that home is a still older-fashioned house upon this side, where the lady of my heart has happened to take up her habitation."

"That speech," remarked Dr. Roger Barnes, stretched in a similar chair on the other side of the terrace, and wearing a similar air of perfect repose and contentment, "strikes me as absolutely superfluous. One glance at you would be sufficient to tell the whole story. I haven't kept house with you for four months not to note the change in your expression now from anything I've seen in all that time."

"Speaking of expressions," retorted Robeson,

comfortably puffing at a short briar-wood pipe, the sight of which had been greeted by Juliet with the warmth inspired by the arrival of an old friend, "I am only awaiting the propitious moment in which to give Mrs. Rachel a brief but telling description of one of yours. It was the one assumed," he continued, now addressing himself to the figure in the low chair at Barnes's side, clearly visible in the protracted twilight of the August evening, "when the foreign mail proved to be a few minutes overdue. We were ordinarily accustomed to find it upon coming down to breakfast on Monday and Thursday mornings. On certain occasions of which I myself have a somewhat vivid recollection—owing wholly to my misgivings as to Roger's ability to bear up under the blow—we were disappointed in this expectation. At these times, after one glance at his pile of mail, noting the absence of a certain foreign envelope usually bearing the announcement that the postage had not been fully prepaid"—Rachel gave a slight exclamation of dismay, which her husband instantly made the occasion for reaching out his hand and taking hers into his clasp—"his speaking countenance would become overcast with an expression denoting profound chagrin. After looking through his letters several times to assure himself that the missing com-

munication was not lurking somewhere among them after all, he would become morose and taciturn. In reply to my comments upon the news in the morning papers, he would suggest that affairs in general, both at home and abroad, were in a condition to make a man feel out of all patience with everybody concerned. You may imagine my feelings——"

"When you are through"—interpolated Roger Barnes, with a laugh, "I'll proceed to——"

But Anthony cut him short. "—my feelings, when forced to listen to such melancholy reflections. In vain I endeavoured to lighten the seriousness of the situation by suggesting that the missing letters would undoubtedly be found awaiting our return from town in the evening, or that they would certainly arrive by to-morrow morning's post. He was invariably convinced that you had missed a mail, and would rail at the inconvenience of an international postal system which provides for the exchange of mail between the two greatest countries on earth only twice a week. He——"

"I—I—I!" shouted Barnes. "I wasn't a patch on him for going into the dumps when that confounded mail didn't turn up. To console myself I braced up and went to see people. I went to my clubs, my friends' houses—anywhere to distract my mind. But he steadily refused to go

out with me. He'd spend half the evening mowing the lawn at a pace that would have mowed the habitable globe in a week if he had kept on, or digging in that garden of yours, Juliet, puttering about it like any old man in the absence of the 'missus.' Heavens! Don't talk to me about the way I grouched on those fatal Mondays and Thursdays. Ask the neighbours. They'll tell you. 'That poor Mr. Robeson, how hard he takes it! You wouldn't have thought she'd go off and leave him all spring and summer, would you, now?'"

In the general laugh which followed the mimicking of a certain elderly widow whose comments were the terror of her acquaintances, Barnes rose. "Rachel, let's leave them to their distorted reminiscences of a day happily now past, and take a stroll in this charming English moonlight, which will appear if the determined English twilight ever gives it a chance."

They strolled away, Rachel's white gown marking their course as long as it was in sight. Robeson looked after them.

"Roger's satisfaction at finding Rachel's willowy figure a shade less willowy and a thought more substantial is worth seeing," he observed. "Come, Julie, what's the reason we shouldn't take a loverish stroll in the moonlight ourselves? We've been married twice as long as they, we're

therefore twice as inseparable. Isn't that logic, Miss Agnes Gilbert, of Boston, where the foot of logic is on her native heath?"

Agnes turned about from her seat a few feet away, where she and Diantha had been listening with interest to the observations of the late arrivals. "It may be logic, but it's a sort one doesn't see illustrated on all sides," she returned.

"What, so young and so cynical? Well, all my wife and I can do to counteract such a state of mind is to keep steadily on chumming it. Come, Mrs. Robeson—let's leave these carping critics to their own reflections, while we follow the footsteps of the Barneses—at a suitable distance."

"They are simply my ideal of a devoted couple," sighed Diantha, looking after the two figures as they strolled away, the one upon the arm of the other, the tall head bent down toward the lower one, and the musical note of mingled laughter floating back through the clear atmosphere. "They're like people in a story, except that they're so practical and jolly along with their devotion that they never seem affected or stagey."

"No, they're genuine, clear through, if ever people were. Sometimes I think, Di, that's the whole secret of it. The genuine people, the people who care about living for real ideals,

are the happy ones—when they marry their own sort."

"I couldn't put it like that," murmured Diantha, "not being a college girl. But I can feel what you mean. The thing is to find out what your own ideals are, and then—to be sure the other person's are the same. 'Ideals'—it's a big little word, Agnes. Would you mind telling me some of yours? Perhaps it would help to show me if mine are right."

"Just what do you want to know about them?" questioned Agnes, gently, for she saw that the girl beside her was quite in earnest.

"Oh—I suppose I mean, just now, I'd like to hear your notion of what you would look for in the —in anybody you thought of liking very much, you know. What would you want—him—to care for?"

"Me, first, I think," admitted Agnes, smiling in the darkness. Then, with a hastily caught breath—"No, not first, after all. I should want him to care for—truth—more than he cared for me."

"Truth," mused Diantha. "Now I wonder just what you mean by that?"

"Well, since you admire Mr. Robeson so much, what should you say was his strongest characteristic?"

"Straightness," declared Diantha, promptly. "He's the sort you'd trust with your money or your life. The sort you can look squarely in the eyes and know his thought about you is—white. He'd defend any woman with that good right arm of his till the other fellow ran him through —and the chances are he'd run the other fellow through first," she added, with vehemence.

Agnes smiled again; the young Westerner's way of putting things was, as often, so graphic. "Yet many a bad man would defend a woman that way," she argued, "particularly if there were a crowd looking on. Mr. Robeson is a Southerner —your image of a man with his sword arm bared in your defence is a particularly appropriate one —or would have been two or three generations back. But I'm sure your opinion of his 'squareness' would carry you farther than his defence of a woman."

"Much farther. He'd measure up to the standard anywhere you might put him. Yet he's no paragon. I don't think I'd like a man to be a paragon, do you?"

"'Paragon' is a particularly disagreeable, sneering word," admitted Agnes, "and Mr. Robeson is the last man in the world to whom one would apply it. He has his faults, of course. Yet somehow he always makes me think of those old

lines of Whittier's in remembrance of a good Englishman:

> " 'Not his the golden pen's or lip's persuasion,
> But a fine sense of right,
> And truth's directness, meeting each occasion
> Straight as a line of light.' "

As Agnes, having repeated the words, seemed to lapse into a mood of quiet musing, Diantha fell silent also. She leaned forward, her round young chin held in her hand, her elbow on her knee.

Her thoughts made long leaps. Busy at one moment with an alert young figure, its handsome, laughing face looking into hers with eyes which were ever ready to say to her that which their owner's lips dared not venture, her imagination would veer suddenly and bring before her another and very different sort of face—lean, keen, sun-tanned, beautiful only with the beauty of vigorous youth and health, its steady gray eyes meeting hers with the quiet, affectionate scrutiny of a tried comrade—a comrade, however, not unpossessed of depths of passion as yet invariably held in check. The comparing of these two images became a not uninteresting study. Agnes being also occupied with thoughts of her own, the two found little more to say until the first of the roving elder couples returned.

Approaching noiselessly by way of the terrace steps, Robeson and Juliet saw the two motionless figures in the moonlight before either Agnes or Diantha had become aware of their reappearance.

"Judging by your descriptions of the past," remarked Anthony in a whisper to his wife, and pausing meanwhile, "yonder pensive scene is in striking contrast to the order of things which obtained in Oxford and London. Do the girls find it painfully dull here?"

"Not at all—at least they don't seem to. Neither of them is the sort that depends on the presence of a young man to rouse her to life. They've been as gay as larks ever since we came."

"Glad to hear it. I knew Nan Gilbert was no mooner, but I'm not so well acquainted with Miss Diantha, and I thought she seemed a bit wistful to-night."

"She's walked some fifteen miles to-day, beside scouring the fields for flowers, so I presume she's sleepy."

"I presume she is. I'll wake her up. It's well enough for moonlight to sleep upon banks, but it's not healthful for little girls."

He made a trumpet of his hands, and sent forth upon the still summer night air a clear, not unmusical rendition of the notes of "reveille."

Then he laughed quietly as one of the figures on the terrace sat suddenly erect.

In response to his summons from slumber a sweet and flute-like voice flung back at him a charming imitation of "taps."

"All right—'*lights out*' it shall be," agreed Robeson, arriving upon the terrace, "if there are any lit about these moon-struck premises. May I inquire if I am expected to assume the rôle of man of the house, now I'm here? Or do you gentle ladies form a procession and go about with candles, assuring one another that the locks are all properly set?"

"We tell no tales of what we have done," declared Juliet promptly. "It is enough that you are here and can take all those cares from our shoulders. From this moment I, for one, inspect no windows, bar no doors, nor do any listening for midnight alarms."

"I suppose," said Diantha, carelessly, "I may as well put my gun away in my trunk. There'll be no need of sleeping with it under my pillow any more."

Agnes rose precipitately from her chair, and took three steps toward Diantha. Roger Barnes, that instant arrived upon the terrace by way of the garden gate, chuckled loudly. Rachel gave a small suppressed shriek. Juliet stood still,

gazing at her charge as if stunned. Only Robeson found words.

"Possibly you'd better lend it to me, Miss Diantha," said he, with a coolness equal to her own. "Defending the family falls to me, now, and since I thoughtlessly omitted to bring my own revolver I should appreciate the use of yours."

"All right, I'll get it," replied Diantha, simply, and ran away into the house.

Behind her the party looked into one another's faces in the moonlight with varying expressions. Doctor Barnes slapped his knee in intense enjoyment of the horror-stricken attitude of Miss Gilbert.

"You wouldn't have slept a wink if you'd known it, Nan, would you?" he exulted. "That's what comes of chaperoning a girl who doesn't hail from Boston, Juliet! Rachel—you remember my advising you to let Mrs. Robeson have the entire charge of Miss Brown? Wise decree, wasn't it? Odd, though, you ladies hadn't scented gunpowder long ago!"

"Do you suppose she's really had it with her all the time?" murmured Juliet.

"Just since we came here I've noticed her putting something under her pillow after the light was out. But I didn't dream what it was. If I had—" Agnes drew an expressive breath.

"She's undoubtedly a crack little shot," prophe-

sied Barnes, still with delight. "Look out—here she comes. No scolding, now. You really owe her a debt for keeping guard."

Diantha advanced, holding something in either hand. She laid a small gleaming object in Robeson's outstretched hand, and tendered him also a box.

"It's not loaded," she said. "Here are the cartridges. It's a beauty. You can throw it across the room, and it won't go off. But when you shoot with it—it hits."

"When *you* shoot with it, it probably does," interpolated the doctor. Diantha turned to him. "Usually it does," she said, with the effect of stating a simple fact.

"Thank you, Miss Diantha," said Anthony, receiving the small, handsome weapon with perfect gravity. "If you'll trust me with it I'll undertake to be responsible for the safety of the household, and you may sleep in peace."

"Oh, I always do that. It's not big enough to be lumpy under one's pillow. And I'm very sleepy now. It's the air, I think—and walking so much. Good-night, everybody."

"Good-night," they called. "We're all going, too."

But before they went they were obliged to slap Dr. Roger Barnes several times upon the back to

bring back his breath, lost in the effort to stifle his laughter, paroxysms of which came upon him every time he looked at the young woman who had slept reposefully for at least ten nights with a bedfellow who possessed, within reach of her hand under the pillow, a loaded "gun."

CHAPTER XV

COACHING IN THE RAIN

"THERE never was a country so astonishing as the English Lake region."

The observation proceeded from the lips of Miss Diantha Brown, seated upon the top of a coach bowling along between Keswick and Windermere, and it was made in a tone of the sincerest admiration. Behind her Dr. Roger Barnes leaned forward and drew the dripping corner of a steamer-rug closer about her shoulders.

"Trim your sails a little more to windward," he suggested, "and they won't leak down your neck. If I could attend to you and Mrs. Barnes at the same time I'd do it, but she requires my undivided attention. Her hat pins are wholly inadequate, and she refuses to tie up her head in a scarf, so what am I to do but keep a watchful eye lest some of her belongings get away from me?"

"Look out for your lady, you devoted squire, and I'll manage for myself. I couldn't be much wetter, and I'm going to try a new plan."

Diantha stood up in her place, which was the box-seat beside the coachman. She removed her

hat and tucked it away under the seat, while Agnes Gilbert struggled in vain to keep her umbrella over her companion's head. "Just don't mind me at all," commanded Diantha, unfolding the rug which had been laid across her shoulders in the effort to stem the drip of the umbrellas in the row behind her. "I'm going to fix myself to stay out in the wet. I'm tired of looking at the inside of that umbrella, and I intend to see what there is to see of the country behind that veil of cloud."

The brown rug possessed a gorgeous lining of scarlet plaid. Diantha shook it out, lining outside, pinned one corner over her head for a hood, drew two other corners about her shoulders, and wrapped her slim body in the remainder. Then she sat down in her seat again, a roll of scarlet, with a sonsy face looking out under a tangle of moist dark curls. Nobody got the benefit of the effect just then except the coachman, but he proved not unappreciative. From this point he redoubled his efforts to help her descry faint outlines of supposititious scenery beyond a nearly solid barrier of mist.

The rest of the party remained beneath their inadequate umbrellas. Nobody had started upon the coaching-trip prepared for rain, for the morning had been marvellously fair. Juliet, indeed, had suggested that it was never out of order in the

treacherous lake-region to take umbrellas and rain-coats, but the rest of the party had scoffed incredulously. They had at last reluctantly put three or four umbrellas into the rack, and had taken along the steamer-rugs, as cushioning for the uncompromisingly hard seats of the coach on the fifty-mile drive to and from Keswick, but nobody had been willing to bother with a rain-coat, and the ladies of the party had donned their smartest travelling clothes.

There was, therefore, to be discerned a trifle of unexpressed regret. But though Roger Barnes had suggested putting his womankind into the interior of the coach, he had done it in such a tone of unbelief as to any one of them being willing to submit to such an indignity, that nobody had accepted the suggestion. Moreover, they were all good travellers, and the long drive homeward was being beguiled by song and jest, to which a few sedate English passengers, upon the rear seats, appeared to listen with interest.

"Here comes another coach-load of daft ones," declared Anthony Robeson, peering forward under the edge of the umbrella he was holding slantwise to protect his wife. "Backs to the rain—they're a trifle better off than we, though they look wet enough to be glad to be stopping, as I believe we're to do, at this little inn. All off for a cup of tea

to warm your in'ards? Better come down, everybody—we've sixteen good miles ahead of us yet."

"Thank you, we will," and the party descended eagerly, and poured into the small inn. The passengers from the Keswick-bound coach came hurrying in after them. Among these last, a young man in a dripping rain-coat, his cap drawn well over his eyes, stared after the scarlet plaid rug, which still enveloped the form of Diantha Brown. He not only stared but advanced without delay to a point where he could see the moist and merry face of its owner, her chilled fingers trying to unpin its folds from beneath her chin.

"I'm thinking I can help you with that," said he, removing his cap and casting off his own wet outer garment.

"Good gracious!" cried Diantha Brown.

"Well, well—what sort of an encounter is that over there?" inquired Robeson, looking curiously across the room to observe two flushed young people exchanging what looked like enthusiastic greetings. "Does Miss Brown know every good-looking youth in this happy country?"

"Why, it's Mr. Fitzpatrick," murmured Juliet, under her breath. "Dear, dear!—Tony, think quick! He's the young Oxford Irishman who did so much for us. Shall we ask him to come to us for a day or two at Bowness? I had thought we

must ask him sometime. I suppose he's on Diantha's trail, but he's all right—he was vouched for by the Oxford men."

"Looks like a healthy sort of chap," was Anthony's expressive comment after a moment's keen scrutiny. "Here he comes—to do the proper thing by us. I think you'll have to ask him."

Fitzpatrick was looking his vivid, clean-faced, bright-eyed best as he came up, and his greeting of the two older men was of the sort which inspires interest, confidence and liking, all at once. He seemed immensely glad to see everyone, and waited on them all in his own deferentially gay manner, afterwards taking his tea at the side of Mrs. Barnes. But though he did his best at being all things to all men and women, it was perfectly evident that Fitzpatrick was principally overjoyed at the meeting with the girl in the scarlet plaid.

"I'll own up frankly enough," said he to Mrs. Robeson, as they were all making ready for the coach again, she having invited him to return with them, and he having promptly accepted, "it was not on account of the scenery I was taking the coach drive in the wet. I took rooms at a Bowness hotel and went up to call at your house, but they told me you were coaching to Keswick. The small town wouldn't hold me after that—as your

countrymen say—so I took the afternoon coach hoping to catch you up. You see—it's not often an Irishman in England gets to know a party of Americans so well, and after you did me so much honour in Oxford, I couldn't be going back to the green little isle across the sea there without a glimpse of you. I've been staying since the beginning of August with my friend Sidgwick at Warwick, and a week ago we started on a walking tour. At Penrith we couldn't agree on our route, so I came over by Ullswater and he went around by the way of Low Gill, and we're to meet in a few days at Windermere."

On the way back Fitzpatrick occupied the end seat of the three in front beside the coachman, and held an assiduous umbrella over Miss Gilbert. No manœuvring on the part of that young woman had succeeded in inducing Diantha to sit between the two. Wrapped again in her scarlet rug, she defied the elements, which during the remainder of the drive home seemed to be doing their worst. All that Fitzpatrick could see of her was now and then a glimpse of a saucy profile, a rain-stung, rose hued cheek, and a drift of blowing tendrils of dusky hair under the sheltering plaid. Diantha plied the coachman with such a fire of questions as that sober person had never experienced before. Only now and then would she respond to an

observation of Fitzpatrick's—attended by a superhuman effort to distract her attention across Miss Gilbert's lap—with a carelessly flung reply.

"Of course she knows she's tantalising him nearly out of his boots," whispered Anthony, to Juliet, behind, after an amused observation of Diantha's high-coloured nonchalance.

"Of course."

"He can't make out whether she's glad or sorry he's been asked to go back with us."

"To tell the truth—neither can I. The girl is something of a puzzle to me. I'm always remembering that nice brawny lieutenant on the other side of the Atlantic, and—I suppose—so is she. Whether she's undergoing confusion of spirit between them, or whether she's only amusing herself with this one, is more than I can quite guess."

"I should advise her not to amuse herself very much with a fiery young gentleman of his nationality," murmured Anthony, in his wife's ear, observing a peculiar jerk of Fitzpatrick's shoulders after one of Diantha's clipped-off replies to a sally of his, "or she'll find herself with complications on her hands."

It was quite possible that Diantha thought the same, for the moment the party reached Brantfell Farm she was off to her room, and that not to hurry into dry and alluring garments, as Agnes,

following her, imagined, but to drop into a low chair by the window and sit gazing off over the hills, regardless of her moist condition. Agnes, busy with her own dressing, presently remonstrated.

"Di, dear, you'll catch cold if you don't make haste to get off those damp clothes. Besides—have you forgotten that you have a guest?"

Diantha looked up. "My guest? No more mine than anybody's. I'm tired, cold, wet, and cross, and don't mean to hurry down. Fifty miles of coaching through an atmosphere like a soaked sponge doesn't incline one to festivity. I wish I could go to bed instead of poking down to dinner."

"If you are cold as well as wet you must certainly hurry to change. Take a nice warm bath and put on your prettiest frock—the green silk with the little red embroidery that suits you so well. Mr. Robeson was starting roaring fires in the hall, dining-room and drawing-room, as I came up, and this morning before we left I heard Mrs. Robeson give directions for a particularly cheering dinner to-night, so you'll soon revive. I admit one doesn't feel hospitable after a hard day's coaching, but poor Mr. Fitzpatrick expects a welcome after all he did for us in Oxford, and——"

"I wish he hadn't done it. He did altogether too much."

"You surely didn't think so at the time."

"I enjoyed it, of course. But I didn't suppose he would have to trail up here after us, just to get the debt repaid." Diantha rose as she spoke and began to pull the hairpins out of her damp locks.

"He would certainly take the next train for Stranraer and sail for Ireland to-night, if he could see you now. He's already lost a little of the beaming expression he had when he met you at the inn. If you continue to leave him to me as you did on the coach, you'll have trouble with him, I'm afraid."

"I'll have trouble anyhow," muttered Diantha, through her hair, which now hung in curly dark confusion over her face, as she manipulated it with brush and comb in the effort to dry it. "The signs are becoming all too apparent. He was nice and jolly on the ship, and he was nicer and still jollier at Oxford—at first. Toward the end he was nice but not so jolly—by spasms. And now I can see that the jolliness is all going to fade away, and leave him just—moony. Oh, how I hate them when they get like that!"

It was impossible not to laugh, the speaker's tone was such a mixture of irritation and disgust.

"I thought Mr. Fitzpatrick was quite as jolly as ever all the way home—and you certainly didn't help him a bit at it."

"Oh, he braced up for the sake of appearances, but he was ready to slump the minute he got alone with me. For heaven's sake don't cast me off into corners with him, Agnes, while he's here. I only hope it will rain every minute of the time, and we'll all have to sit in a heap around the fire, and Patsy'll be forced to talk Russian and English politics with Mr. Robeson and Doctor Barnes. If it clears off I shall take to my bed."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. You'll go fishing with him—in the rain. I know you, now. You can no more help leading a poor fellow on——"

"I don't lead people on. Wasn't I as disagreeable to him as I could be, all the afternoon?"

"You certainly were—with the result of sharpening his anxiety to transport you to the Emerald Isle for the rest of your life."

Diantha replied with something unintelligible, but which sounded vaguely as if it included the word "idiot," and ran away to her bath, her hair in a great mop on the top of her head. She had not returned when Agnes left the room.

Half an hour afterward, and but two minutes before the hour for dinner, Diantha appeared in

the doorway of the dining-room. Anything more demure than her attire could hardly have been anticipated. Instead of putting on the captivating little green-silk gown with the touch of scarlet embroidery which was wont to set off her dark beauty like a particularly well-chosen frame, she had elected to array herself in a sober dress of her characteristic brown, with no relief to its dulness but a severely chaste little chemisette and turned-back cuffs to match. It was anything but a dinner costume, and the other feminine members of the party, all in pale-coloured muslins and ribbons, gazed upon her in some surprise—if any new vagary of Diantha's could be truly said, after four months' association with her, to cause real surprise. Her hair was arranged with evident effort to subdue its customary riotous effect as severely as possible. The unintentional result of all this was to make her look like an unusually pretty young nun, with a heaven-born desire to curb all worldly inclinations.

"But I believe it's absolutely lost on him," thought Miss Gilbert to herself, as she watched Fitzpatrick's expression at Miss Brown's entrance. "He's entirely beyond being wet-blanketed by any falling off in her general appearance, so long as it doesn't affect her face, and I don't know but, after all, she's defeated her own ends. Seems to me she

never looked more lovable than she does this minute, talking to Roger Barnes with that air of being a very, very good child."

If Mr. Timothy Fitzpatrick had come to Bowness-on-Windermere with any seriously defined intention of making love to Miss Diantha Brown, he certainly found it a difficult matter. Not only on this first evening, but the next morning, the succeeding afternoon, the following evening, was she as unattainable as the North Pole—though it could not be truthfully said that she was as chilling. It was impossible for Diantha to be chilling, no matter how hard she might try. There was ever about her a certain warmth of kind-heartedness, to say nothing of an outward colouring and presence, which precluded any possible effect of frigidity. Haughtiness, pride, stateliness—these were not characteristics one could ever impute to the Western girl. Attempts at dignity were apt to end in a burst of laughter, and austerity of expression to melt into a mischievous demureness by no means terrible enough to frighten an aspiring suitor away from her side. With all this, however, she could be as elusive as ever a feminine creature was made to be, and so Fitzpatrick found her. He could lure her into no interviews lengthy enough to amount to anything, from his point of view, nor could he

manage to get her quite alone with him on land or water.

His friend Geoffrey Sidgwick finished his despair by appearing twenty-four hours ahead of time at the Bowness Royal Hotel. Mrs. Robeson, upon learning of his presence, and feeling under obligation to him because he had allowed her to occupy his Oxford rooms and had through Fitzpatrick refused all payment therefor, immediately invited him up to dinner.

"With a new man upon the scene, you can certainly venture to put on something more frivolous than brown pongee," suggested Agnes, upon the evening of the interesting—because as yet unknown—Mr. Sidgwick's expected presence. "Just condescend to dazzle him a bit, won't you? It may relieve the situation by giving Mr. Fitzpatrick a rival. Besides, there's to be someone else at dinner to-night. Doctor Barnes ran across Mr. Lockwood in London yesterday, and wired just now that he was bringing him home with him."

"Goodness me, how festive! I'll be as gorgeous as I can, if Mr. Lockwood's coming, to keep you in countenance," and Diantha made haste to look out the yellow-poppy-flowered frock which she had not found occasion to wear since the "captain's dinner" on board ship. The

result was a momentarily dazed expression on the face of Fitzpatrick as she came downstairs, and a peach-hued accession of colouring in that of Geoffrey Sidgwick as his friend presented him to the younger ladies of the house. As for Diantha, she frankly stared as she shook hands.

"I've certainly seen you before," she observed promptly, regarding the athletic frame and ruddy face of the tall young Englishman. "Where was it—do you remember? Not at Oxford, because you weren't there. Nor in London. It was a good way back—yet you don't look quite familiar after all!"

If young Sidgwick's face had been rosy before it was crimson now. He was speechless for a minute, while Fitzpatrick looked at him with an evident longing to punch him and make him speak up properly. Then he murmured: "I think I saw you in South Devon."

Mirth flashed into Diantha's face with a sudden recollection. "Oh," she cried, "of course! I should have known you perfectly, if you had only had a—" she paused. Diantha had learned a bit of discretion since she crossed the Atlantic. She had been about to say—"if you had only had a bath-towel hung round your neck." But with just an instant's hesitation, while Sidgwick seemed to catch his breath, she substituted—"a cup of

tea in your hand," and Agnes, who was beside her, also breathed freely again. If Diantha had based her recollection of the newcomer upon the mention of a bath-towel, Mr. Sidgwick might certainly have been expected to turn and flee.

As it was, he rallied. He recalled the tea-house upon the hilltop in the rain, and Diantha succeeded in establishing conversationable ground with him upon the subject of the frequency with which rains are accustomed to visit the South of England in April and May, and the consequent effect upon the roadways thereabouts. Mr. Sidgwick also admitted that cricket practice was sometimes seriously interfered with by the incessant showers, and remarked, quite by himself, that this was "a pity." Diantha drew him out upon the subject of cricket until both the game and herself were practically exhausted. Encountering Agnes in the hall, after ten minutes of the sort of dialogue alluded to, Diantha drew a long, long breath, and clutched her friend's arm.

"I've got to cultivate him, to save me from Patsy, but oh, I shall die, doing it! All he can say is 'oh,' 'rather,' and 'quite so.' If he approves of a thing very much he says 'rath-*er*.' How can you say Englishmen are nice?"

"This is a very boyish one—and you scared him almost out of his wits at the start, so that he

may never recover sufficiently to be himself with you. Wait till you know a full-blown one—really know him. Remember that charming M. P. we met in London—Mr. Firth? And Mr. Fielden—and Mr. Bispham—and Professor Clegg?"

"Yes, of course—but they were all so devoted to you, I didn't come in for any share at all. . . . Oh, there's Mr. Lockwood! Doesn't he look splendidly American and distinguished?"

Diantha's observing eyes noted a change of colour in Agnes's face, and she thought she detected the faintest trace of unusual animation in that young woman's manner of greeting the arriving guest. "Only you never can be quite sure whether it means anything," she reflected, as she shook hands with the handsome, middle-aged, but youthful-looking bachelor, "because these girls of her sort never betray themselves or let themselves go. They're always properly sweet and gracious, and never demonstrative or blushy. They never have to struggle with their inclination to mention bath-towels as a starter for conversation after an introduction. Oh, if I could only be like that!—But if I *should* get to be like that—*what would Lin Webb say?*"

CHAPTER XVI

TO THE AMAZEMENT OF THE ENGLISHMAN

I'M VERY, very sorry," said Mrs. Juliet Marcy Robeson, appearing upon the terrace at five in the afternoon, two days after the arrival of Mr. Lockwood, "not that I asked Mr. Sidgwick to come home to dinner with us, nor that Mr. Lockwood and Mr. Fitzpatrick are staying with us, but that there's no dinner at all until I cook it."

The rest of the party looked up at her with dismayed, sunburned faces. They had spent the day fishing upon Windermere. At one side of the terrace the men were getting a collection of fishing tackle into condition to put away. At the other, Mrs. Barnes, Agnes and Diantha had sunk into chairs, to gain breath after the ascent of Brantfell, before going in to dress. There was an instant's hush before anybody rallied from this blow. They were all starvingly hungry, for a day's fishing, with only a basket-lunch, hearty, but cold, to appease appetites made sharp by the sport and the fine Windermere air,

had brought everybody to the point where one of the Brantfell dinners seemed a feast exceedingly to be desired.

But now a chorus of voices proffered assistance. Mrs. Barnes and the girls rose with offers of help; Anthony dropped his tackle and advanced toward his wife. Geoffrey Sidgwick looked on and listened with incredulity to the offered solution of the problem which his hostess presented.

"Mrs. Weldart's great-aunt has been taken violently ill, and she has been obliged to go to her. She left soon after we did this morning—according to a remarkable note I find pinned to the wall. It results that the fire is out, the supplies in a cold and raw condition, and the dinner in the nebulous future, even if I attacked it all by myself, or slyly summoned the girls to help me—" But she got no farther.

"I'll make the soup," said her husband.

"I'll peel the potatoes," said Diantha.

"I'll dress the salad," said Agnes.

"I'll grill the chops." Roger Barnes glanced at young Sidgwick as he spoke, and chuckled to himself at the bewilderment upon the Englishman's face.

"Go to, all of you," commanded Lockwood, with voice lifted above the others. "Give me a chafing-dish, or a saucepan over the fire, and

I'll make you a dish out of whatever offers that'll outshine everything anybody else can do."

"Mr. Fitzpatrick," began Robeson, ceremoniously, "if you and Mr. Sidgwick will be so kind as to excuse us all until such time as——"

But Fitzpatrick came forward. This sort of thing was new to him, but he was quick enough to catch at the opportunities it appeared to offer. "Take me on the force as scullery-maid, please, now," he begged. "I'll be the humble helper to you all."

Miss Diantha Brown paused in the doorway, as the procession went through, and looked back at Mr. Geoffrey Sidgwick. "Can it be possible," said she, with such a look at him through her black lashes as brought him across the terrace at a speedier gait than any to which he was accustomed, "that you are going to sit here in solitary state while the rest of us slave to produce a dinner for you?"

Sidgwick stared at her. "Of course not, Miss Brown," said he. "That is—if you think I'd better go back to the—the hotel—It was stupid of me to—not to——"

"Is there anything you can do," said she, surveying him, "in the way of getting a meal?"

He stared harder than ever. His burned face grew shiny with the perspiration which started

out upon it. Never in his experience had anything like this happened to him. "Why, of course," he stammered, "I'd jolly well like to—to be of any use, you know——"

"Of course you can be if you want to," said she.

"I—er—I don't know anything whatever about cooking, but it's quite all right if you——"

"If we all cook, who's to set the table?"

He gazed at her helplessly.

"Everything's on—or in—tne sideboard," she pursued, "or in the china-cupboard. Shall I show you?"

He followed her. Fitzpatrick saw the two disappear into the dining-room together, and regretted that he had offered his services as scullery maid.

"There are nine of us, you know," said Diantha, pointing out the table to the dazed young Englishman at her side. "I'm going to leave you entirely to yourself, and see what happens. Please don't allow yourself to become nervous over the problem. You can't possibly know, and I can't tell you yet, what we are going to have to eat—and with so many cooks I doubt if we shall have anything at all. So you will have to use your judgment about forks and spoons and knives. But I advise you to do your part, and lay the silver for a full dinner.

Then nobody can blame the butler if the cooks fail."

Mr. Sidgwick regarded her intently as she spoke. She was at the moment a breezingly charming figure to regard, in her fishing costume, her hair, in curly disarray, capped by a wide straw hat well pushed to one side, her cheeks richly reddened by the day in the sun. He came to his senses, and said precisely what any astute young man would have said in the circumstances—much to her surprise.

"If I do my best, even if it's not at all the right thing, you know—will you go for a stroll with me afterwards?"

"I'll think seriously of it," agreed Diantha, and left him.

An interesting comedy now took place in the kitchen, which, as Geoffrey Sidgwick grew bolder, he ventured to look in upon from time to time, while he struggled with the knives and forks. Mrs. Robeson had bestowed pinafores upon the women, pinned fresh towels across the fronts of the men, and taken command of her forces with a right merry good will. Fitzpatrick, as in a corner of the old kitchen he sliced or chopped the ingredients of Mrs. Barnes's salad for her, looked on appreciatively, never losing sight, however, of the figure which was to him the central

one. Diantha was engaged in nothing more serious than the finding for Lockwood the various articles he demanded for the composition of the dish he was to cook, but the occupation sent her flying from dresser to pantry, and from cold-storage to dining-room, and as she went she made comments.

"Anything more touching than the sight of Mr. Robeson's anxiety each time he tastes that compound in the kettle, I never saw," she averred. "I believe the result is getting worse and worse."

"At the last I intend to shut my eyes and shake the pepper-box over the kettle," retorted her host, "so that nobody can guess at the original flavour."

"Mr. Lockwood, if you put everything there is into that dish, what will there be left for the others to cook with?"

"None of you will want anything more to eat after you have tried my concoction," replied Lockwood, confidently, at which Fitzpatrick murmured to Mrs. Barnes. "A doubtful recommendation, that, I'm thinking!"

"Mr. Fitzpatrick, you're not chopping a thing but the bowl. It makes more noise, of course, and calls more attention to your labours, but——"

"Come here, Miss Diantha, and I'll tell you why I do it that way. A little closer, please—I don't want to give the secret away. It's because

—would you mind, now, inclining your head a bit more convenient to my speech?—because the sight of you is that disthractin' to the loikes o' me, Oi can't be afther kapin' me moind on me wurruk, at ahl, at ahl!"

"That's a poor excuse enough," and Diantha's head was immediately inclined in another direction.

The meal was ready in due course of time—a dinner it could hardly be considered—and Sidgwick's arrangement of the knives and forks called for Diantha's personal reconstruction. After a brief interval allowed for making the cooks presentable—no revolutionary change of dress being permitted—the food was served. Each cook attended to the distribution of his own course, and the result was such a species of merrymaking as quite to take the hitherto serious Sidgwick off his feet, and so to infect him that in the course of the affair he was heard to make at least two attempts at a jest. He smiled appreciatively over most of those propounded by others, and finally he was betrayed into laughing immoderately at one of his host's witticisms. The young Englishman had, by the way, conceived an immediate and decided liking for Mr. Anthony Robeson, and in spite of a previous strong prejudice against the nation which he represented, admitted to himself and to Fitzpatrick that here was a man who seemed

able to comprehend English politics almost like an Englishman.

"Faith, that's a compliment indeed," Fitzpatrick had responded, with a twinkle of the eye, and Sidgwick had agreed very gravely that it was.

At the close of the impromptu meal there ensued a season of clearing away and of dish-washing to which the guests were not admitted. Anthony was instructed to take the three men out to smoke, and Doctor Barnes was dismissed likewise, but refused to go.

"Few are the chances I've had to show my prowess at the art, since the evening I met my wife," said he. "Anything which recalls to me that hour does me a joyous service."

"Please tell us about it," requested Diantha, flourishing dish-towels before him, "as the price of admission."

"She had already laid siege to my heart," Barnes began, with a laughing look at the lady in question, "by merely allowing me to be presented to her, and by offering me oysters and coffee with her own fair hands, as Mrs. Robeson's friend, in the happy days when the Robesons kept house without the assistance of a useless retinue of servants. But when, an hour afterward, I invaded the jolliest little kitchen you ever saw, and beheld the charmer

with her sleeves pinned up, a white apron enveloping her as with a cloud, and her demurely ravishing profile bent above a dish-pan containing Mrs. Robeson's choicest wedding-china—well, I can only say that she bowled me completely over. From that moment I was her slave. I began my duties in that capacity by wiping the cut-glass goblets she had washed—I wonder that I didn't kiss them when her back was turned, so complete was my intoxication at handling them after her. She——"

Rachel Redding Barnes flashed a dainty look at him across the kitchen, and he nodded back, laughing. "She forbids me to go further, Miss Diantha. Besides, she considers it bad for me to instruct you in the mysteries of the art. But it's all right. Mrs. Robeson, having had one lesson in the dangers of exposing her bachelor friends to the sight of girls engaged in the fascinating rites of the dish-towel, has wisely banished the three now under her care to the safer precincts of the terrace, where——"

"I beg your pardon," said an insinuating voice at the crack of the kitchen door, "but why mayn't I be helping at this stage of the game? It looks to me much less complicated than the other!"

A chuckle of laughter from Barnes, and a murmured "Thus history ever repeats itself," from

that same interested gentleman, answered Fitzpatrick and he came boldly in. At the same moment Diantha vanished up the kitchen stairs.

Mr. Geoffrey Sidgwick had his evening stroll with the young person for whose company he had spoken. It was for him a bewildering experience. Never in his life had he been treated to the amazing inconsistencies of the feminine sex as he was during that brief hour throughout which he and Diantha promenaded up and down the wide walk upon the crest of the hill, just out of sight of the house. She was by turns amusing, irritating, charming, and belligerent. She questioned him on his two favourite subjects—cricket and politics. He praised cricket as an incentive to exercise; she upheld baseball as a stimulus to sport. He proved to be a strong Conservative—she vigorously supported the Liberal party. She lured him on to criticise the democratic form of government, and then hotly supported everything American, from the Statue of Liberty to the Golden Gate. She vaunted the superiority of the Yale-Harvard-Cornell systems of rowing over those of Oxford and Cambridge—thereby rousing him to do battle valiantly; then she soothed him by praising everything English she could think of. By the time he had brought her back to the house he was in a condition bordering on mental aberration, yet

withal ready to throw himself at her feet because not for one small moment had she appeared to be trying the least form of coquetry upon him.

"And do you think," said the voice of Fitzpatrick in Diantha's ear, from his seat on the terrace step, where she had inadvertently placed herself beside him, taking him in the darkness for Mr. Robeson, "that's it's treating a lad quite fairly, to be going off with a new acquaintance for the whole of the evening? And myself leaving to-morrow!"

"I'll sit right here, if you like," responded Diantha, under cover of the talk upon the terrace, "until the moon goes behind that cloud."

Fitzpatrick gazed scrutinisingly at the heavens. "Faith, and I'll hold you to that," said he, triumphantly. "If the breeze is in the quarter I judge it is, it's not that cloud that'll cover the face of the moon this blessed night. It'll float safely by below."

An hour later, Agnes, making ready for slumber, having lit no light because of the rare flooding of the whole room with the radiance from the unclouded moon, was surprised to hear the door thrown open and closed with a snap, and to discover Diantha in the act of flinging herself face downward upon the bed. She looked on in some anxiety, and as she caught the sound of a smoth-

ered sob, moved doubtfully across the room and laid a sympathetic hand upon a warm and heaving shoulder. But as she touched it the figure upon the bed started up, drew away, and got to its feet.

"I didn't know you—had come up," said a choky voice, evidently trying hard for self-control. "I—don't mind me, please. I think I'll go down on the terrace again for a little—there's nobody there now."

Agnes asked no questions. Diantha was not the sort of girl who pours confidences into the ear of any convenient friend. She had never told Agnes a word of the soldier who had come to the ship to bid her good-bye; she had never vouchsafed a comment upon her friendship with the young Irishman beyond a merry recounting of their adventures together. The Eastern girl, trained in the school of a fine reserve upon all matters of this sort, wondered at finding her own principles carried out by a girl in whom frankness and outspokenness in ordinary affairs were of every-day occurrence. She understood and respected the pretty Westerner the more because her own notions of girlhood as lived in a country where Boston canons are not supposed to prevail had been of a very different sort. When Diantha quietly left the room again, Agnes was hoping with all her kind heart that whoever had been wounded in the

fray she could not help suspecting had taken place, it was not the bright creature whose capabilities for deep experience were surely hidden under an exterior so gay as to deceive all but those who knew her best.

But, next morning, to her astonishment, there was no possible evidence to be noted that such a serious matter as a wound had been either given or received. Never had Diantha been merrier, never had Fitzpatrick's manner assumed a more engaging whimsicality. They exchanged various diverting sallies at breakfast, and up to the very time of Fitzpatrick's departure both maintained so natural an appearance of light-heartedness that Agnes began to wonder if Diantha's over-night tears had been shed for some reason quite apart from any situation of the young Irishman's manufacturing. She even saw the parting, heard Fitzpatrick say frankly before them all, "I'll be seeing you again, somehow, Miss Diantha, before you leave the country, so I'm not saying good-bye," and heard the girl's blithe response, which conveyed a cordial hope that they might meet again.

"Either they're both wonderfully good actors," said Agnes to herself, with a sense of relief, "or it has really meant nothing. Still, I'm confident he's in love with her. If she had refused him he never

could carry it off with so high a hand. I believe the child cares for him, but is held by a sense of loyalty to her lieutenant, and he sees it, but doesn't give up hope. If I could choose for her, I'd give her to the American. What a pity he isn't here to fight his own cause! He certainly looked as if he could do it. And I doubt if even the charming Irishman could hold his own with Diantha if she saw the two together. The trouble is—she can't."

CHAPTER XVII

FROM OUT OF THE WEST

"WHO," inquired Anthony Robeson, a fortnight later than the date on which Fitzpatrick and Sidgwick had taken their departure, "is going to accept Lockwood's suggestion that we all meet him at the Dublin Horse Show?"

"I, for one," responded Doctor Barnes promptly, "and my wife for two. I would suggest that it be yourself for three, Juliet for four, Miss Gilbert for five, and Miss Brown for six. Four chaperons are none too many for these girls, at a place like that."

"I don't think I will go," observed Juliet.

Anthony looked at her. "Any good reason for that statement?"

"I don't like to leave the children."

"Of course you don't, dear. You brought the best nurse in the United States with you, and said you would go off on expeditions from time to time and trust the youngsters in her skilled hands. But I can't find out that you've done it—except when you preceded your party on one or two occasions to look up quarters for them.

Suppose you take a brief holiday now with your husband."

"I'm not going if you don't," whispered Diantha Brown in Mrs. Robeson's ear.

"Why not, little girl?"

"I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"The sight of the horses. I didn't mind that mild cantering up and down Rotten Row, and could keep from envying those girls by scoffing in my mind at their stiff riding and prim get-up. But if I see a lot of Irish lads leaping over hurdles on splendid horses, I shall do something outrageous, I know."

"What do you think it will be?" queried Robeson, amusedly listening to this expression of caution, for Diantha had forgotten to whisper.

"I can't tell—I never can. But if a rider should be thrown, and his mount go galloping off over the field, I know I never could resist running after him—the animal, not the owner."

"The fact that you will be wearing your most ravishing frock at the time, high-heeled shoes, a gorgeous hat, and carrying a frilled pink parasol, may mercifully tend to prevent your catching him," he suggested.

"Since I don't wear very high-heeled shoes, nor ever carried a parasol in my life, there'll be nothing except the frock and hat to prevent. I shall wear

my travelling clothes, and pin my hat on with three extra hat-pins," declared the girl.

"I'll wager you a sprig of white heather you'll fall in with the custom when you get there. When a woman looks out of window and sees another woman sailing by in a garden-party gown, she's sure to snatch off her own sensible travelling clothes and don her most inconsistent toggery," asserted Barnes. "I've been a spectator at this Dublin Show before, and I'm prepared to see my wife appear in all she possesses in the way of astonishing millinery, just to prove that she is not an American tourist dashing through. As for the fine horses, Miss Diantha, there's no question but you'll see plenty to make your heart leap into your throat." He proceeded to describe the entire event, as he had seen it some years before, with the effect of arousing enough enthusiasm in his listeners to secure their attendance, if only to verify his extraordinary statements.

All but one. Juliet steadily resisted all entreaties, and when Anthony pressed her for her reason said decidedly: "To tell the truth, dear, I've had rather a busy season of entertaining, and don't feel that a jaunt to Ireland will be especially refreshing. I want you to go, for I'm sure you'll enjoy it, but I should really prefer staying quietly here alone."

Anthony studied her intently. "Do you mean it?"

"I certainly do."

"Would it take away from the restfulness of the place if I were to stay with you?"

She smiled at him. "That's like you. Of course it wouldn't. But I'm going to send you off with the others, just the same, for I think you'll have a good time. There are to be some Kentucky horses there——"

"Ah! That's artful of you, if you want to be rid of me. I should like to see how they measure up with the other thoroughbreds. Suppose then I go over with the party, stay a few days, and come back, while the rest make the tour Roger plans. I don't care for that, for it's familiar ground. Then you and I will have a bit of holiday to ourselves, than which nothing could please me better, Mrs. Robeson."

It was thus decided. The party went gaily off, declaring to the last that the lady of Brantfell Farm was making a grave error in refusing to accompany them. They never knew with what a sigh of relief, dearly as she loved them, she saw them disappear. She knew she should be quite as glad to see them back, but for the interval she longed for a breathing space from the duties of hostess.

On the third day of the party's absence Juliet

was sitting upon the terrace, book in hand and a bit of sewing in her lap, having spent a luxurious morning of idleness between the two pretences of employment, when her attention was caught by the click of the gate between garden and lawn, and she lifted her eyes to see an unfamiliar figure advancing toward her. As the vigorous-looking specimen of young manhood nearing her reached hailing distance he took off his hat, and came on bare-headed to stand before her, saying with a slight smile:

"I don't expect you know me, Mrs. Robeson, but I hope I can get you to remember me."

She rose at once, inwardly saying to herself, "Heaven bless me!—what am I to do with him?" but answering cordially, "Surely I do, Lieutenant Webb, even out of uniform. I'm sorry I did not know you were coming."

"I hope that's not a gentle rebuke to me, for walking in on you without warning," he responded so anxiously that she made haste to add, "No, indeed—but we meet our friends from the other side with flags and music, when we know. Welcome to Brantfell Farm—but I'm afraid the farm is all that's here to give you welcome. The rest of the party are away."

He stood staring down at her for an instant, the light going out of his face at the news. But his

manner did not alter as he said quietly: "I'm sorry for that, for I've only a three-weeks' furlough, and the fastest boat that floats couldn't leave me long to stay."

She took him into the house, gave him luncheon, and admired him for the courtesy which kept him from showing, after the first moment, the disappointment that she was sure was his. She spoke of the possibility of his being able to catch the party before they should leave Dublin for the North of Ireland.

"I'm going to try it," said he. "While you were away just now I was studying your time-table here, and I find I can take a train in an hour for Barrow, and reach Dublin to-night. You say they weren't sure whether they'd stay for the last day at the Show, or start North. But there's the chance they'll stay if this good weather holds. If they go to the Show that means I have to find them in the crowd. It may not be easy among thousands, but I can try."

"Why not wire at once and tell them you're coming?"

He shook his head. "I'd rather not, thank you. If I find them, that's all right. If I don't —well—if you'll just tell Miss Brown, when she gets back, that Lincoln Webb was here, I'll be grateful to you."

He interested her, this keen-faced, powerfully built, young Westerner. She noted his military carriage, plainly recognisable in spite of his citizen's clothes; his control of his feelings at having come five thousand miles to see Diantha Brown only to find her away; and his reticence in regard to the purpose of his coming, at the same time that his face showed his intention of carrying out that purpose if the thing could be done. It was all interesting to the friend of Diantha, and Juliet found herself heartily hoping that Lieutenant Webb had not crossed the ocean in vain. At the same time she thought affectionately of Timothy Fitzpatrick, whom, she had not the least doubt, Diantha would find turning up in Dublin at that same Horse Show—though the girl had not once seemed to think of this possibility. Altogether, Juliet wondered what might be going to happen.

But there was some time to intervene before Webb could take his departure, and his hostess, being wholly a woman, felt that she could at least give him something to listen to. So she recounted various of her party's experiences, taking care to speak of Diantha usually in connection with Miss Gilbert, and to mention Fitzpatrick in a casual way. She could not tell, from his reception of her recital, whether he had ever

heard of that individual before, or if he had, what he thought of his association with her charges. Altogether, Juliet discovered herself to be making the acquaintance of an altogether new sort of person, as different from the exuberant Fitzpatrick as Diantha herself was different from any girl Juliet had ever known before.

Her only reward for the pains she took in giving him the sound of Diantha's name was the recognition that he was listening as intently as she had ever been listened to in her life, and the reception, when he took his leave of her, of a hand-grasp which all but crushed her delicate fingers, and left them aching until he was out of sight down the hill. Into that mighty grip she knew that he had unconsciously put his disappointed heart.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAY HORSES JUMP IN IRELAND

"WELL, Miss Diantha, what do you think of it?" inquired Doctor Barnes of the young person who sat next him in the grand-stand, at the Royal Dublin Society's Horse Show, on the second and greatest day of that event. "Rather interesting looking crowd, aren't they?"

"I think they're altogether too much dressed up," replied Diantha, critically. "And lots of them never look at the horses at all. What's the use of a splendid creature's sailing the way that last chestnut did over a bank-and-ditch, a ditch-and-bank, a four-foot stone wall, a double-bank, a water-jump, and a hurdle, with nine-tenths of the people looking the other way?"

"It's not quite so bad as that, is it? But if it were—the enthusiasm of the other tenth—the wise ones—isn't that worth doing his best for?"

"I think they ought to stop talking and just keep still. They make some of the horses awfully nervous, and those red and green and purple parasols in the front row have made at least a dozen horses refuse the wall. Isn't it enough to

have to race at a thing like that without having to keep your eye on a waving mob of colour at your left?"

"On the other hand, with no spectators, those fellows wouldn't look half so spirited. Besides, the older horses don't mind the crowd at all—it's the young ones who play to the galleries."

"Oh, there comes a beauty!" cried Diantha softly, standing half-up in her seat. "See—the one just walking on, on this side—the roan. What shoulders—how awfully well-set-up! Oh, he'll get over everything all right. See him swim over that first bank—like a bird!—Now that bad ditch-and-bank that so many hit with their heels —he'll take it—he'll take it—there!—Now the stone wall—Oh, he's rushing it—No, he isn't——he's over, without a slip—the other horse knocked off a bucketful of stones. Now for the double. Oh—he can't be going to refuse! Why —why—Oh, what a—How could he?"

She settled down into her seat quite disappointedly, and Barnes consoled her.

"It's not always easy to pick a winner, and he did look a smooth fellow. See, his rider's going to make him take it. No—not this time, eh? Well, at it again—he'll make him do it. Ah—hear the applause? That was for the clever rider, not for Bounding Billy. His ball won't

go up, I fancy. No, only the white. Never mind, Miss Di—try again. Which of this pair, now, red or white?"

Diantha sat up. She gazed hard at both of the pair about to jump, holding Doctor Barnes's field-glasses focussed on them until they were off. Then she watched them around the course, but made no comment.

"A satisfactory performance," declared Barnes. "If the next do as well—Here they come. That's a fine gray, Miss Di. Look, isn't he about the most dashing specimen yet?"

Diantha focussed the glass again. This time she kept it at her eyes until the riders had gone round the course, each having made a display without an error. The jumping went on, the exclusion of the jumpers who did not keep up to the standard gradually narrowing down the competition to a comparatively small number, with the result that a certain few conspicuous animals kept coming, at short intervals, to the field.

"Here's our gray again," said the doctor. "I'm beginning to get up more interest in him than in any of the rest. I'm willing to venture he'll stay in, and likely take a prize. He has a peach of a rider—the fellow's a Centaur. With any ordinary chap on his back Heatherbloom would be all over the course."

Diantha's glass again followed Heatherbloom around the field. She had grown rather singularly silent.

"Losing interest?" asked the doctor. He and Diantha were two seats away from the rest of the party, having been a moment behind the others when the great crowd surged into the grand-stand. "Look at the frocks awhile, and rest your nerves. It's a great display, isn't it? If my wife should appear in certain of these Parisian-Irish-English get-ups, she'd have to leave me behind."

But Diantha paid small attention to the crowds upon the promenade below the stand, as they ceaselessly paced up and down between the people above and the field below. When the gray horse came out again, she was watching with the glass.

Suddenly Lockwood leaned forward and tapped the doctor upon the shoulder. "Tell Miss Brown we think the rider of that gray has a familiar look," said he.

The doctor begged the favour of the glass. He scanned the rider of Heatherbloom. Then he glanced at Diantha with a quizzical smile.

"I had understood," said he, in her ear, "that Mr. Fitzpatrick was off for Belgium when he bade us good-bye."

He was a keen reader of signs, but it puzzled him to know if the profile beside him, the dark

cheek as nearly pale as it was possible for Diantha's cheek to be, expressed pain or pleasure. The girl answered more quietly than was her wont, "So did I."

"I like to see the gentlemen ride much better than the jockeys," went on the doctor, without looking at her again, but following the gray as he went over the initial jump of the course. "They ride better, it seems to me—though it may be merely that I like their trimmer look, and so give the clothes the credit, as has been done since the beginning of time. How much better Heatherbloom takes the ditch and that wide bank than the others. Now for the wall. He hasn't yet knocked off so much as a pebble. There he goes—Hullo—by Jove—he's down!"

"That was a bad one," said a man on the other side of Diantha, as a murmur of solicitude went over the audience, and everybody stood up and craned their necks to watch. The horse had scrambled quickly to his feet, but the rider, though he clung to the bridle at which Heatherbloom pulled wildly, lay still. After the first instant's pause a hundred men ran toward the spot, and quicker than Diantha could draw her first choking breath the scene was hidden from her and from all but those near at hand.

"He's probably not badly hurt," whispered

the doctor, "but if he doesn't show up in a minute I'll go and see. I think, though, he's up—yes, and still holding to the gray. Good pluck, Fitzpatrick, good pluck!—Ah, ha—the crowd think so, too—hear that? He's on his feet—he's walking off—What?—he's coming back! He's not going to try that wall again, after such a header?—But that's what he is! Well, well—I didn't think it of the Irishman."

Other eyes than Diantha's watched anxiously as the rider of the gray threw himself again into the saddle. It was asking something of both horse and man to try again without pause an obstacle that had thrown them so heavily. But Fitzpatrick put Heatherbloom at the stone wall at a dash, as if neither of the pair had ever known a fall. They went over without a touch of the trim heels, and the enclosure rang with applause. As if to make up for defeat Heatherbloom took the remaining hurdles with more than usual brilliancy.

"They surely won't disqualify him, after redeeming himself like that, I hope," and Barnes watched the pole where the raising of the red and white balls, after each pair of jumpers had rounded the course, proclaimed whether one or both were to be allowed to remain in the competition. "Good!" he exulted, as the appearance of the white ball

beside the red showed that Heatherbloom had retrieved himself and was permitted to remain.

The jumping came presently to a close. Fitzpatrick's horse had stayed in to the end.

"But he'll not get a prize," said Barnes. "They couldn't give a reward to a horse that had taken a fall. Too bad, for I've a notion that it wasn't either the fault of the gray or her owner, but something we didn't see that happened to startle Heatherbloom just as he rose at the wall. Well, now the jumping's over, what's the next event? A parade of winners? That'll be worth seeing. Then don't you think we ought to go down and look up Fitzpatrick? It'll be easy for us to find him, but ten to one against his finding us, in this crowd—if he knows we are here. I wonder if he does."

The question was soon answered, though not by the person of whom it was asked. A messenger made his way into the grand-stand; looked about him with some hesitation; presently came to Mrs. Barnes and presented her with a note. She communicated its contents to the rest of the party, and a few minutes afterward Diantha found herself with the others making her way out of the grand-stand—an immense affair, stretching hundreds of feet along the side of the course—down to the great promenade. They progressed along

't slowly, as way could be found in the throng, toward the end, where it was somewhat clearer. Just as they reached the open space they met Fitzpatrick.

He had got out of his riding-clothes, and into frock-coat and silk hat, and the only signs left of his previous hard exercise were a sunburned countenance and a bandage about his left wrist. The men of the party greeted him warmly, and the women joined in praising him, though he protested that it was his own clumsy riding that had justly earned him his fall.

"I thought I heard said, as I came through the crowd," observed Barnes, "that something happened to startle your horse."

"More shame to me, then," answered Fitzpatrick, "that I hadn't him better in hand. Don't mention the matter, please, gentlemen. I'm feeling chagrined enough, and there's no excuse for me—except that I knew my friends' eyes were on me. And it's happy I am to see you all. Will you come along with me and have a cup of tea over here?"

After this refreshment, served to them in a pleasant room which their host had evidently engaged for the purpose, they went back to the grand-stand for the final events of the day. It was at this time that Fitzpatrick, having devoted

himself assiduously to everybody in turn except Diantha, now came to her elbow. As the party worked its way into the crowd again, suddenly the thing happened against which Diantha had been taking every precaution in her power. She and Fitzpatrick became separated from the rest of their friends.

"Oh, how did he do it?" thought the girl, pressing forward in the attempt to catch sight again of Mrs. Barnes' white hat or of Agnes's pale blue one. But quite in an instant, in the enormous press of thousands, gathered closest just below the centre of the grand-stand, where were the Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and his party, it had been the easiest thing in the world to become separated from all but the one person whose hand, lightly laying hold of his companion's arm, had kept her close to himself.

"They must be just ahead," urged Diantha, craning her neck to see between ranks of shoulders. "Let's try to get through here. I'm sure we'll catch them again if we don't stop."

"To be sure we will," agreed Fitzpatrick, and apparently made tremendous efforts to get himself and Diantha through the press. He gently elbowed here, he begged pardon there, he said

"Come this way, now—I think they're just beyond,"—but all quite without avail.

"I don't see how they got away from us," she mourned. "I'm afraid it will be dreadfully hard to find them again—unless they go back to the seats where we were before."

"That's probably what they've done. Have a bit of patience, Miss Diantha, and I'll restore you to their arms."

She coloured but did not answer. Fitzpatrick piloted her to the place in the grand-stand where the party had been through the afternoon, only to find that their vacant seats had been preëmpted by some of those who had been long standing. Look where she would, Diantha could see no familiar face. Top hats, and hats of white and pale-blue, were as thick in the surging mass of colour on the promenade as crests of foam upon a wind-swept sea. Having scanned the concourse from end to end in vain, Diantha's eyes met Fitzpatrick's and fell.

"It's unfortunately evident," said he, meaningly, "that you'll have to trust yourself in my hands for a brief period of time—or send me away and sit here by yourself. If that's what you prefer, Miss Diantha, you've only to say the word."

"What nonsense," said she, at last realising

that she was giving considerable provocation for the angry sparkle which was beginning to show in the hazel eyes above her. "Let's sit down here and talk. I want so much to hear what you saw in Belgium."

"You do? Faith, then, it was not much but what I saw in my mind's eye. If I should tell you what that was, you'd be making one plunge into the crowd down there, and losing yourself entirely. It's not I who could find a young lady who doesn't want to be found."

He lifted his hat as he spoke, as Diantha had seen him do many times before, and always to the sort of people a girl must be glad to see a man who is her companion acknowledge as his friends. This latest acquaintance was an extremely handsome girl, distractingly dressed, her tall figure a conspicuous one for beauty and grace of carriage.

"The girls are so pretty here," said Diantha, hastily. "That one you bowed to is lovely. I've noticed her several times to-day. She's much prettier than most of the English girls I've seen, though many of them are simply wonderful."

"Miss O'Morchoe is considered a great beauty," returned Fitzpatrick indifferently.

The minutes passed by. Diantha kept up an effort at conversation which Fitzpatrick politely seconded. Diantha's confidence returned. They

were too close to ears, on every hand, for her to fear that her companion would venture to introduce any subject he might not be willing to have overheard. But it occurred to her with force that if she could not find her friends before time for the closing of the Show for the day, she must allow him to take her back to her hotel, and then—there was no knowing what might happen on the way.

It was not in Diantha's code to allow a man to make love to her, much less to ask her to marry him, if she did not know her own mind concerning him. She might be willing to be great good friends with him, accepting his devotion up to a certain point, counting it but the evidence of his kindness of heart that he should be so good to a raw little Westerner, as she was accustomed to regard herself. But let him once venture beyond a certain well-defined line in her imagination—presto—her firm young hand would draw a strong check upon the rein, and the steed which was getting ready to bolt into the land of courtship would find himself stoutly held back upon the safe borders of every-day good comradeship.

Meanwhile, singularly enough—and yet, after all, quite as these things happen—another separation from the party had taken place. When it occurred Doctor Barnes was standing close by

the rail at the edge of the promenade. He and Robeson, with Rachel, had stopped to observe closely a certain chestnut mare which had taken Barnes's fancy, and which was now being put through her paces. Barnes spoke across his wife to his friend.

"Unless you make a bolt and get away from us, I judge our party is now reduced to its lowest terms. We lost Fitzpatrick and Diantha at one end of the grand-stand, Lockwood and Nan here in the middle."

Rachel glanced hastily about her. "Why, has Agnes disappeared too?" she asked, in surprise. "She was just behind us a minute ago."

"That may well be, my dear, but I detected in Lockwood some time ago symptoms of intention to escape, and was not in the least surprised when he affected not to see us turn off toward the rail, but kept working ahead. Never mind, I confess I, for one, wish him extremely well. Having worsted him long ago, in a certain race, I'd like to see him win out this time."

"So should I," murmured Rachel, and they exchanged a smile of understanding.

"He's worn his rue long enough, to my mind," whispered Barnes, and she nodded.

Pressing on through the crowd to a distant point he had in view, Lockwood, with Miss Gilbert,

had come to a block in the way. The Lord Lieutenant and his party were making ready to leave their box in the middle of the grand-stand, with intent to proceed to their carriages, waiting in front at the edge of the jumping ground. The crowd, after the manner of crowds, had accordingly pressed closer, and the jam immediately in front of the box, through which certain officials and policemen were attempting to clear a way, had become impassable. Lockwood and Agnes found themselves caught in nearly the thickest part of the mass of gaily dressed, chattering, interested people.

Agnes tried to gather her delicate blue skirts about her, but found a man's heel set firmly upon their hem. With a little laugh she called her companion's attention to this circumstance, and he, with a polite request, effected her release. Then he gently but firmly pushed himself to a position where he stood between her and those who were still pressing toward them from behind.

"This is pretty thick," he said in her ear, "but there's no getting out just yet. Can you breathe?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, as she raised a shielding hand to the rim of her wide, blue-plumed hat, which a lifted elbow was threatening, "only I wish I were a little taller."

"I don't," he answered, with a look she did not see.

He stood close behind her shoulder, and she was held as tightly against him as if he himself were holding her there. His left arm was half around her to protect her from the crush, which was now extreme. It was some time before a passage could be made, but at length the Earl and his party were able to descend from their box and to make their way through the aisle, with difficulty kept free for them. Suddenly Agnes felt herself violently thrust backward by the hulking form of a young man who was, at all costs, determined to reach a point further forward. Instantly Lockwood's arm caught her in a tight grip. He muttered angrily "Brute!" and added anxiously in her ear, "Did he hurt you—that barbarian? I wish I could get at him!"

"Only my feelings," she whispered back.

His arm retained its position for a moment longer, then reluctantly released her, but remained where it could at any moment come between her and further rough treatment. Presently Agnes felt her right hand, which had been pinned down at her side, drawn into Lockwood's clasp and held there. A tightening pressure which seemed to say many things made her cheek grow warm.

"I mean never to let go of this," said his low voice at length, "unless you say I must."

It was a full minute before a small answering pressure met his. All he could see was the top of the blue-plumed hat, but the touch of the fingers must have been eminently satisfactory, for he drew a deep breath, and held the hand without relaxing his tense pressure until the blockade was over and the crowd thinned. It is more than possible that neither of the two concerned in this brief, nearly mute drama could afterward have told much about the appearance of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, or after what fashion he had responded to the cheers of the enthusiastic people who surrounded him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WEST GIVES CHASE

"THERE'S just one more favour I'm making bold to ask," said Fitzpatrick to Anthony Robeson. To Diantha's intense relief, at the moment that Fitzpatrick had been about to put her into a four-wheeler to take her back to the Dublin hotel where the party were staying, they had come upon Doctor Barnes. Fitzpatrick, with a disappointed stiffening of the shoulders had accepted Diantha's decree that all should proceed together, but he had not yet given up the game as lost.

"Ask it by all means," responded that gentleman heartily, with enough insight into the situation to enlist his sympathies on the side of the young Irishman, whom he thoroughly liked.

"You're coaching up into the North of Ireland, I believe?" questioned Fitzpatrick.

"Yes—we start in the morning, early. Will you come? Since we've missed you at the Show until just as we're leaving, it would give us much pleasure to have you along. Mr. Lockwood goes with us, and I'm sure we'll be far the jollier if

you'll just sing us a song or two as we jaunt over the moors."

"I'll be only too happy, if you'll allow me," responded Fitzpatrick. "I'll have to leave you at the Causeway and go on over to Londonderry, where I've a business engagement for the thirtieth, but if I might just spend to-morrow on the coach with your party, it will give me a fine memory to bring back to Dublin with me. I only wish I could ask you to my home, but my father's down in Switzerland with my mother—she's a bit of an invalid just now—and the house is closed—worse luck!"

"Thank Heaven!" said Diantha, within herself, and breathed a devout little petition that she might be able to cope with the situation on the morrow. Just what that situation was to be the girl no more guessed than she guessed that Lieutenant Lincoln Webb was at that moment standing upon the deck of a steamer crossing the Irish Channel from Barrow to Dublin, and offering prayers of his own that with but thirty-six hours left in which to find the object of his quest, he might meet with no delays.

"I'm sorry to tear you away from sportive Dublin," announced Barnes at the hotel, coming in from a session of inquiries at the office, "but it turns out that it is necessary for us to get up to

Belfast to-night, in order to take our coach at ten in the morning from Larne."

"Then I must wire my wife," and Robeson promptly went to do it, being accustomed to keep Juliet in full understanding of his whereabouts when away from her.

Juliet received this telegram just before she went to bed, and its result was to keep her awake for an hour or two, thinking how she might let Lieutenant Webb know in which direction his bird had flown. She knew that he would go to the hotel at which the Robeson party had been, on the chance of finding out there for what point of Ireland they had left. So in the morning she sent off a telegram, at the earliest moment possible —which, in small towns in England, is none too early for anxious despatchers of messages. The telegram found him just as he was leaving the hotel, with his heart somewhere in the region of his boots. The party had left for Belfast the night before—that was all the manager knew.

But the telegram said: "Party coaching from Larne to Giant's Causeway Friday," and it sent Lieutenant Webb on a hot hunt for time-tables and coaching-schedules. After a keen half-hour of this, there remained to him but one possibility. He could get off for Belfast at once; he could go on from Belfast to Larne without much delay;

but arrive in time for the morning coach he could not. Yet if he had plenty of money in his pocket —this was the unspoken condition of his adviser, who decided by his trim look and coolly confident manner that there could be no question of this— he could hire a private conveyance and catch his party half-way up to the Causeway—namely, at a small place called Cushendall. It is hardly necessary to state that the first train thereafter proceeding to Belfast conveyed at least one American passenger with his face set toward the north.

At the breakfast table in Larne, however, Barnes—who had assumed the conductorship of the party—made a new announcement, born of renewed investigations among coach-agents and booking-offices. "It transpires that these Irish rascals, when they advertise a coach, do not necessarily mean a coach at all. So instead of taking our fifty-five mile drive to the Causeway in a fairly comfortable vehicle, of the sort we get in England, we go on a *char-à-banc* of the Irish variety, with backs about six inches high. Thus to Cushendall. From there we proceed by jaunting-car, of the back-less type, where we sit in a row and swing our feet off into space—because we get tired of keeping them on the ledge. Now, these are highly uncomfortable vehicles, but I

suppose your courage is not in the least damped thereby."

"Not at all. But could we mercifully break our journey somewhere on the way?" suggested his wife.

"That's precisely what we can do. I am proposing that we idle about the sightly town of Larne during the morning, take the afternoon coach north, and stop over night half-way, at a —they assure me—most comfortable inn."

Everybody agreed enthusiastically to this plan, even Diantha, who thus far was finding Fitzpatrick unexpectedly amenable to reason, and so had fallen into a sense of security hardly warranted, since that fellow-traveller had not yet been for a moment alone with her.

It thus came about that Lieutenant Webb, bolting into Larne somewhere toward noon, was unknowingly for a brief space within a half-mile of the object of his quest. At the moment that he was making hasty inquiries at the coach's booking-office, the Robeson party were sitting composedly upon a certain eminence overlooking the town, surveying the charming view and discussing the possible advantages of the harbour over those of the harbour of Dublin.

A busy and abstracted clerk ascertained for the young American with the quietly authoritative

manner that the names he asked for were upon the coach's booking-list for the ten o'clock *char-à-banc*. The clerk failed to note, however, that this list of names had been crossed off and transferred to the booking for the afternoon vehicle, so Webb turned away, confident that he was close upon his party's track. He looked up a jaunting-car with a jolly-faced driver, and made a bargain with him to proceed with all haste to Cushendall, with the promise of an extra fee if he should succeed in reaching that point before the departure of the connecting coach for a point further north.

Just why, at this crisis in his fortunes, Lieutenant Webb should not have forsworn his determination not to telegraph ahead his impending arrival, and thus secure the finding of Diantha awaiting him, may not be much discussed. It certainly had begun to look very much as though, if he could not surprise her according to his plan, he really meant to go back to America without seeing her. It is possible that a mind trained in the school of military methods may find it inconceivable that the attacking party should give the enemy warning of his approach. Lieutenant Webb may have believed that the particular fortress he designed to capture must be taken by storm if it were to fall into his hands at all. At all events, as he was driven away out of Larne at a pace which caused

other drivers of outside cars to look after his particular jarvey as if they thought he had taken leave of his senses, certain determined lines, always visible about the sturdy American's mouth, were drawn more than usually tense. The glance of his eye ahead, as he scanned the road, winding ever along the foot of the cliff, in and out of the deep curves of the shore, and therefore sometimes observable miles in advance, was that of the man who not only expects but intends to come upon the object of his pursuit.

The conversation during the journey was not of enough importance to be recorded at length. The driver of Webb's car, finding himself in the employ of a well-set-up American, possessing an eye which gave the impression that nothing ever escaped it, set out to make the most of his opportunity.

"It's moighty foine scenery O'll be afther showin' ye, the intoire linth of the way, sor," he began. "As well worth seein' as any we've passed yit."

"Yes?" said the American.

"There's not a droive in ahl Oireland that'll compare with it, sor. It's manny a gintleman from your country, sor, I've shown the soights of the East coast, and not one of thim ahl but wint away sayin' 'twas a jewel of a thrip."

No reply. The passenger was studying his

guide-book. The driver waited for an interval of ten minutes, when the guide-book had been put aside, and the passenger was again scanning the road ahead.

"Thim two lighthouses you see off to the roight, are worth your observation, sor," he began cheerfully, and continued with an elaborate description, eloquently handled.

"I see," said his passenger, his eyes returning, after one glance at the dim marks in the offing which indicated the presence of the lighthouses, to follow the windings of the road, some miles in advance, where for a distance its outlines were more than ordinarily distinct. "Is that a car I see across there?"

"It may be, sor, but it's not the charry-bank ye're lookin' for. If we coom up with that tin siconds before it's off from Cushendall for the Causeway, we'll be doin' the best ye can ask. They've a good two hours start of us, and it's but an hour they stop at the inn for a bit of lunch. If ye'll take my advoice, sor, ye'll be enjying the beauties of the way, an' not lookin' ahead for what ye'll not see till we get there."

A slight smile curved the corners of the passenger's lips, showing a gleam of white teeth. Then his face became grave again. "All right, Pat," said he. "Go ahead, and point out all the sights, if you like."

"I'm not the man to be talkin' to deaf ears, sor."

"No?" The passenger had a note-book in hand; he made a memorandum in it, writing steadily with the book held on his knee, in spite of the jogging of the car. The driver observed him with interest.

"It's you Amirican gintlemen that are great for puttin' iverything down on paper," he observed. "Now, while ye're makin' mintion of the fact that ye've hired the bist jarvey in Larne for yir thrip, why not add that ye'll ricommind him to all yer American frinds that come afther ye?"

"If you'll make Cushendall before the horses are put on the coach for the journey north, I'll double the fee I offered you," said Lieutenant Webb, with a glance at the horse ahead of him.

"Faith, an' Oi will do that, sor. It's not yersilf that needs be worryin'. Oi may say to ye, sor, that there's a man dhrivin' ye now that could take ye from Portrush to Cork, an' back ag'in, an' niver miss the way."

But with small faith in this eloquence, his passenger held an inexorable watch in hand, and proved to his driver that there could be no loitering. Neither, after a time, was there much talk. It's little use, even for an Irish jarvey, to spend his breath upon a passenger who does not

listen, who gives only a perfunctory glance at the cliffs on the left and the sea on the right, and who spends his time in making intricate calculations with railway-and-steamship time-tables and schedules. Indeed, it must be admitted, a traveller can hardly be blamed for keeping his mind upon such details, when, journeying as fast as he can go toward the North of Ireland, he knows himself to be due just twenty-four hours hence at the South of it, with a boat to catch. And if, meanwhile, there is a girl to be found, a wholly unknown quantity in the matter of a rival to be disposed of, and affairs of moment to be settled, he may well pursue his journey, as this traveller did, watch in hand and eye upon the road ahead.

"Here we are, sor. And the horses jist bein' brought round to the car. It's earnin' a good name from ye we should be, me beast an' me!"

A moment later he was grinning over his fee, and his passenger was face to face with the smiling, red-cheeked housekeeper of the little Irish inn. A question, an answer, and Lieutenant Webb was staring with disappointed, incredulous eyes out of the inn door across the courtyard, where the horses were being put to the long-car.

"Is it the American party from Larne the gentleman's inquiring for, Mrs. Finnerty? Have ye not heard of the message we're having from them?

They're waiting in Larne for the afternoon coach, and 'll be spending the night with us."

Surely the coach-yard was not a sightlier place than it had been a moment before. But when Lieutenant Webb's eyes went back to it again, after meeting the interested gaze of the manageress of the inn, who had put her housekeeper in remembrance of the telegram received in that person's absence from the inn's office, it might have been the most charming spot in Ireland, for the look of relief and satisfaction he gave it. Ten minutes later, having engaged a room, he was eating a hearty lunch, the coaching time-table beside him, and the information that the Larne *char-à-banc* was to arrive at six o'clock that evening staring him happily in the face as he ate.

CHAPTER XX

AND CATCHES UP

THE *char-à-banc* from Larne drove up to the inn at Cushendall. It contained only the American party and two or three country passengers who, upon being set down, at once made their way to other parts of the little town, leaving Roger Barnes's party practically in possession of the inn. The inn, it may be said, had been particularly impressed by the long and detailed telegram it had received, ordering its largest rooms and its most hearty dinner, and was at its hospitable best. Although it was yet barely the beginning of twilight, its windows upstairs and down were alight, and through those of its coffee-room could be seen a table laid and maids bustling about.

"What a comfortable little place," commented Agnes, as she and Diantha, in a snug bedroom upstairs, opened their travelling cases and prepared to make themselves fresh after the journey.

"Isn't it? I'm so glad I've my prettiest little frock, that takes up only three inches of valuable space, to put on to do it honour. I didn't think

I'd like Irish inns, but I do. What could be cleaner than this? Oh, how good cold water feels after that long drive!"

Barnes, standing at the foot of the queer little staircase, welcomed his three ladies. "How do you all manage, after so brief an interval, to come down looking as if you were just up for the delights of the evening after a refreshing sleep?" he asked, handing them into the coffee-room. "When I come to analyse it I have to acknowledge you're in traveller's trim, with no nonsense about you, yet each of you gives the effect of a complete dinner costume."

Diantha, laughing, followed Mrs. Barnes into the long, low room, Agnes coming after them with Louis Lockwood, who had joined her in the hall. Fitzpatrick, Robeson and the doctor brought up the rear. They were the sort of party which causes the management of such hostelries to stand at attention, and both the maids in the dining-room and the manageress in the hall were observing them with eager and respectful interest.

A fire ordered by Barnes—not because it was necessary, but as the last touch of comfort in their reception—snapped in a curious little fireplace. In the centre of the room a large table was set, lit by candles. There were other tables in the room, all unoccupied except one, in a corner at the far

end of the apartment, where sat a single person with his back toward the company.

"They had no private room to give us, but the landlady explained that they have only one other guest to-night, who will soon be through and away," announced the doctor in an undertone to those of his friends nearest him. "So let joy be unconfined, and give the lonely chap in the corner a notion of how jolly a company of Americans can be when they're off on a holiday."

The table was rather brightly lit, with its candles, set in all sorts of odd and fantastic candlesticks, contributing a decided air of festivity. No less than six gay bouquets, at regular intervals along the board, also added their quota to the decorative effect. The party themselves, none of them of years so many as to have given them the look of age, some of them still possessing the radiance of youth, were of an aspect to charm the beholders, though of these there were now only three blooming Irish damsels and the guest in the corner.

This guest in the corner had but a single candle. He had had two when he first took his place at his solitary table, but he had promptly extinguished one. He had also a tall bouquet of poppies. It may not seem fair to tell it, but the truth was that, being alone in the room for a minute or two before the arrival of the other guests, he had cast a quick

eye over his own and the other table, and then in a twinkling had deftly exchanged the bowl of trailing honeysuckle which adorned his small table for the aforementioned stately bunch of scarlet poppies, in a thin, high vase, which was nearest him at the end of the larger table. It may have been a military manœuvre, it may have been a mere preference in the matter of flowers, but it unquestionably made of his table a strategic position. And in this wise:

As the meal at Doctor Barnes's table proceeded, and the party, engrossed in their own satisfying consumption of the well-cooked viands before them, lost memory of the quiet guest in the corner, they became merry in truth. It was a decorous merriment and the gaiety of the participants was entirely within bounds, but the result made none the less as goodly a picture to look upon as could have been found within the length and breadth of Ireland. It can hardly be wondered at that the mute occupant of the single table should have turned a listening ear, nor that presently, at a moment when the attention of the company was engaged with an interesting discussion of future plans, he should quietly have drawn his chair around to the back of his table where he could command a view of his fellow guests. With the tall barricade of poppies before him, and the one candle removed

to a position where its light illumined his plate rather than his face, his was indeed a point of vantage. As for his appetite, it appeared to be prodigious, for he ordered dish after dish and took his own time at them. Only a wondering little Irish maid-servant, with a half-crown in her pocket, knew how many of these viands she bore away unconsumed.

Doctor Barnes sat at the head of the table, Mr. Anthony Robeson at the foot, nearest the small table in the corner. Next him upon one side was Miss Gilbert, upon the other Miss Diantha Brown. Beyond Diantha sat Fitzpatrick, and whenever the young Irishman turned toward her, his face directly confronted that of the solitary guest. More than once the two pairs of eyes met, unconsciously on the part of Fitzpatrick, who was absorbed in his companion, but with full understanding on the part of the stranger, who, secure in the other man's ignorance of his identity, frankly met that other's indifferent glance with one of keen attention. But whenever Diantha turned her head toward Robeson, thus bringing her face into range from the small table, the poppies invariably sheltered a head bent over a plate, and nothing would have attracted her observation, had she looked that way, but the outlines of a hungry fellow traveller, busy with his dinner.

If Lieutenant Lincoln Webb was there to recon-

noitre, before advancing to storm the citadel, he could not well have had a better chance. Anything plainer than the condition of the rival besieger could hardly have been conceived. Fitzpatrick was, past all concealment, a suitor for the hand of the girl at his side. Though he laughed and made merry, his state of mind was none the less evident, and that he was as yet no accepted suitor he who ran—to say nothing of him who observed from behind a barricade of poppies—might read with ease.

As for Diantha herself, anything prettier than her dainty fencing her friends had never seen. Pursued from Land's End to John o' Groats—so to speak—by a persistent young gentleman who would not take her warning evasiveness for an answer, she was clearly doing her best to lead him no further. Unequivocal comradeship, of precisely the same sort that she was ready to give any man in the party, was absolutely all she was vouchsafing him. She met his ardent eyes fairly with a level glance, she would allow no extended dropping into low and private conversation—in a word, she gave him no chance. And as the man who watched her saw her manner and the whole look of her under these intimate and tale-telling conditions, the expression of his face gradually changed from one of grim alertness to that of a

stirred satisfaction and relief. Yet—the citadel was still to be won. The mere fact that the other attacking party was being worsted was by no means proof that his own guns must not be trained with care upon these fair but redoubtable walls.

He moved the vase of poppies to one side. The party were finishing their meal, lingering over it with debate as to how the remainder of the evening was to be spent. Fitzpatrick made a low request in Diantha's ear. The girl turned her head aside, and her eyes, with a dash of dismay in them, wandered to the adjacent table where, for the first time, the solitary guest was sitting with head up, looking her quietly full in the face. The look she met was the old direct, searching one, with a spirit in it which lit it into the finest life.

With a smothered exclamation she sat staring back. Fitzpatrick's gaze followed hers, and he started up, his ready temper rising on the instant at sight of the pair of cool gray eyes he had already encountered several times, scanning his companion so intently. But the lieutenant rose also, smiling.

"*Lin Webb!*" murmured Diantha, and stood up, a surge of rose-colour sweeping over her cheeks. She held out both hands. Webb came quickly around his table to her, and took them. If Fitzpatrick, staring in anxious astonishment at his face, had taken time to look at the stranger's hands,

"Lin Webb!" murmured Diantha, and stood up.

he would have seen that they were crushing Diantha's small ones in the grip which speaks a mighty joy.

The rest of the party had barely taken cognisance of the little scene before it was over. Lieutenant Webb was shaking hands with Mr. Robeson, greeting the rest of the party, and answering their interested inquiries concerning his hasty journey. He told them with a cool and reserved sort of frankness—if the paradox may be allowed—of his arrival at Bowness, and of his following them to the limit of his time. He said, quite as if it did not matter in the least, that he was to leave in the early morning in order to catch his boat at Queenstown.

One would have thought Lieutenant Webb had not come to see Diantha Brown. The older men of the party, comprehending the tenseness of the situation and desiring in the most friendly way not to defraud the newcomer of a quarter-hour of the brief period of time belonging to him, did their best to favour him. But they found him determined to play his part with all the restraint and courtesy expected of mature manhood under the most trying circumstances. Clearly he did not intend to bolt into a corner with the girl he had come to see. None the less, when the other men took into consideration a certain indefinable yet positive quality in his personality, they could have

little doubt that no earthly hindrance would keep him out of that corner before he should be through with the affair in hand. Meanwhile——

"Miss Diantha," said Timothy Fitzpatrick in the girl's ear, "you may be thinking to get off without that bit of a talk with me I've been looking for. Will you give it to me now?"

Diantha set her lips. They were suspiciously inclined to tremble, but he did not know it. It may be questioned if any girl, from East or West, could have found herself in precisely this situation without feeling a trifle unnerved. But after a minute she walked straight over to Lieutenant Webb, who, with Doctor Barnes, was just entering the small parlour of the inn where the others had gathered.

"Mr. Fitzpatrick leaves us to-morrow, too," said she slowly, but without quite meeting his eyes. "I had promised him a half-hour walk. Shall I keep my promise—even though you've only just come?"

"Of course, keep your promise Miss Diantha," he responded promptly, looking down at her, while Barnes admired him unreservedly for the way he held himself in hand. "Mr. Fitzpatrick must know by this time you're a keeper of promises."

He turned toward Fitzpatrick—standing by with high-coloured face and warm, unhappy

eyes—and smiled slightly. It was not the smile of the man who does not fear to give temporarily into another man's care the possession which is indisputably his own. It was that of him who, though in doubt how the game is going to turn, and understanding that thus far he himself has been at a disadvantage, yet intends to "play fair" to the end. Roger Barnes could have patted him on the back. Yet, as the idea occurred to him, he chuckled inwardly at the notion of anybody's patting that broad, straight back, and telling the owner thereof that he was a good fellow.

CHAPTER XXI

A CHANCE APIECE

OUT in the cool Irish twilight, with Diantha pacing slowly by his side up and down the quiet road which wound past the whitewashed, flower-surrounded inn, Fitzpatrick found it no easy matter to make use of his half-hour. After five minutes of silence, while he struggled vainly to find words in which to put his case, he broke out:

"It's no good at all my trying to tell you how I feel, since the other man arrived. But I can't be content till I've done it. You've put me off and put me off—and I eating my heart out—as you knew——"

"Mr. Fitzpatrick—" Diantha made the effort of her life to speak quietly and gently—"you've given me a very happy time with all your kindness, and I'll—not forget it. We've been good friends, and I—I've tried to show you how we Western girls—and all American girls, I'm sure—feel about a man's being nice to us. He has a right to get to know us, and we have a right to know him. We like to be good friends with men,

because—they're so good for us. They teach us all sorts of things we'd never know. We get—what Miss Gilbert would call their point of view, and it keeps us from being—silly, I think. I—don't you know it would be better for us not to have this talk?"

"I do, but I don't care for that—begging your pardon. I won't say you've played with me—I'll acquit you of that. I knew all along you meant to show me you didn't want to lead me on, but I—It's no easy matter for a lad like me not to be led on by the beauty of you, the sweetness of you—the wit, the—Oh, it's what one doesn't come across every day and I—" He broke off, sighing as heavily as it was in his warm-blooded Irish nature to do, and following his dramatic instincts quite as unconsciously as do most young men of his race and temper.

Diantha, with a few murmured words and the tacit effort at withdrawal of her manner, tried her best to keep him from carrying his as yet unspoken declaration to a climax, but he would not be prevented.

"Anyhow, I've my chance," he said doggedly. "And though it's no chance at all, as I well know, I'm going to take it. You can't keep me from that. It'll be a bit of satisfaction to me to remember that you've heard me say the words—even he

can't deny me that—he meant me to say them—I saw it in his look at me. 'Say it and be done, and give me my turn'—that was in his face—the gentleman he is—I'll say that for him. Yes, and you'll have to hear me out."

And Diantha heard. When it was over, and in the darkness Fitzpatrick, with lashes wet, had caught her hands and fiercely kissed them, and left her at the inn door, she was longing to run away somewhere—anywhere, rather than face Lincoln Webb to-night. And yet, when she came reluctantly into the small hall of the inn, and read upon a moon-faced clock that it was half-after-nine, a hot sense of injustice to him smote her. Like a girl in a play, she said to herself, she was being forced into a close succession of situations and made to handle them as best she might.

As she stole past the door of the little parlour on her way to a minute's refuge in her own room, she saw that it was deserted except by one figure. With his back toward the door, his hands clasped behind him, his head upturned as he seemed to study a flat little picture of an Irish peasant scene, Webb was waiting. She knew that it was his hour, that all her friends so recognised it and had taken themselves away accordingly. Fitzpatrick would show himself no more to-night—he had

even said that if he did not turn up in the morning she mustn't blame him. He wasn't a military man, he had declared bitterly, and couldn't face the thing out with a high head—he was only a heartbroken Irish lad who must get off by himself and try his best to bear his fate. Diantha recognised the exaggeration in these words of chagrin, as she had always recognised the charming blarney in his speech, and her one comfort in the havoc she had wrought was her confidence that the handsome, warm-hearted fellow was not built long to mourn one pretty girl when others should pass by.

But the other man—he was built in quite a different way. In every strong line of his figure, as she stood still outside the door and watched him—on the wing for flight if he should turn—she read his character. The next pretty girl would never turn his head, though a regiment of them should pass by, once he had set his loyal heart upon one. As she studied him her throbbing pulses quieted a little, and a sense of being under a very valiant and tender protection, now that he was, even for one night, beneath the same roof, came drifting comfortingly upon her.

For an instant the impulse to keep him waiting no longer, because the time must be seeming to him at once so long and so short, took hold of

her, and she advanced a step toward him. Then, being a woman, the remembrance that she had spent an hour in the darkness outside with a melancholy lover who had kissed her hands brought her the notion that she must wash those hands and—see if her hair were——

But it was too late. Lieutenant Webb had caught the breath of a sound her foot had made, and he turned in a flash. "*Ah-h!*" he said, with a long breath, and the next minute was beside her. He gently closed the door and stood still, looking at her as if he could never look enough.

It must be admitted that he had reason. If she had had a chance to look into a mirror there is no knowing what changes she might have made in her apparel. As it was, she was wearing a long white scarf with a scarlet border twisted about her neck and shoulders, this being the feminine expedient when shelter from the evening air is supposed to be necessary. It sheltered nothing, being of gossamer fabric, but it served to add the last bewitching touch to her appearance.

When Diantha had borne Webb's silent inspection as long as she was able, and its continuance had brought colour enough into her face to suggest an attempt on her part to match the scarlet of her scarf with her cheeks, she essayed to open the conversation. She sat down in one

of the straight-backed inn chairs, and Webb drew up another.

"I didn't mean to be so late," said she.

"Didn't you?" he answered gravely. "With every minute that went by I was thinking—But never mind that. I know I had no right to be thinking anything about it. It was his chance. It was rather hard luck for me that he hadn't taken it before, but I suppose he thought the hour of parting the propitious one, and so—But that's neither here nor there. The thing to me is that I've come across the Atlantic to see you, and I'm going back in the morning. You can't wonder if I don't begin by talking about the weather and the voyage. Can you?"

Diantha smiled—a fluttering sort of smile, with her eyes looking down at her fingers, which were doing their best to keep themselves still in her lap. "I don't think you ever were very accomplished at talking about the weather," said she. "I'm sure you never cared much what the weather was going to be."

"Neither did you. Many's the mile I've galloped beside you in the wet on Big Jim, you on Starlight, because we'd defied the look of the clouds an hour too long. . . . Have you thought of those rides of ours, ever, over here, Dina?"

She lifted her eyes for an instant. It was only

for an instant, for she could not meet his, which never left her face. "Many and many a time," she admitted.

"Have you? You never mentioned it in a letter. Fine letters, those were, and told me lots I wanted to know—and left out so much I wanted to know more, that after I'd read one of them over till there wasn't much left of it I was still in a questioning state of mind. And there weren't so many of them that I had any trouble in keeping them all in my pocket—for reference."

"I wrote dozens of them."

"They must have mostly miscarried, then. These are all that came to me." And he put his hand into his breast-pocket and drew out a little batch of thin envelopes with the English post-mark and stamp, all of which together did not make much of a packet. Diantha regarded them with surprise.

"I must have written more than that. But how absurd—to carry them all around in your pocket," said she.

"Absurd? Why?"

"They weren't worth it."

"They weren't worth as much as I could have imagined you were capable of making them," he admitted, with a slight smile. "But still worth more than anything I owned. And the cool way

they mentioned the Irishman brought me across to have a look at him."

"What did you think of him when you saw him?" She really would not have been a woman if she had resisted asking this question, now that he gave her the chance.

"It's a little difficult for me to see straight when I look at him," said he, and set his lips for a moment before he proceeded. Then he went on with quietness. "I can see he's a gentleman. He's as good looking as a man can well be, and I'm sure, under other conditions, I'd like him. As it is—I think you'll have to let me off on that, Dina."

There was a minute's silence. Webb got up abruptly, paced the length of the room and back again, and stood still before Diantha.

"I don't want to know what you've said to him," said he, "but I don't think I can stand it much longer without knowing what you're going to say to me. Have I—any chance left?"

"When I came away," began Diantha, struggling desperately to keep from betraying the fact that she was trembling in every nerve in a way that she had never known herself to do before in all her life, "I thought I was to have—a year—before I—answered."

"Yes. That was the agreement. You'll do me the justice to remember that I haven't written

you a word of—love-making,"—his own bronzed cheek took on a warmer colour—"though I didn't promise not to. But there was nothing said, I think, binding you to wait a year before you gave me my answer—if you should happen to come to a decision before."

She looked up quickly, and as quickly down again. She had thought he was smiling confidently, but he was not. He was looking as anxious as she could possibly expect him to look.

"Not that I thought—had any reason to think," he went on quickly, as if divining her suspicion, "that you knew your own mind any better than when you went away. But—the fear began to take hold of me that you did know it, and that it was—turning away from me. Then—I was offered a three-weeks' furlough. Dina—I had to know how it was going. If you had decided against me—I had to know that. If my chance was left——"

Suddenly he dropped upon one knee before her. It brought his face on a level with hers and he looked closely into it. He laid one hand gently upon hers.

"Girl—you're shaking," he said rapidly, half under his breath. "I've known you all your life—I taught you to ride and shoot—and you never, with your gun drawn on your first buck—had a

shaking hand like that. You're not afraid of me—Lin—your old comrade! You sure know, dear, you've no need to be afraid of me. Lincoln Webb's not the man to try to carry a girl off by storm, no matter how he loves her. He does love her—with all there is of him.—But—if you—don't know yet——"

Diantha drew her trembling fingers away, and put both hands for an instant over her face, while Webb waited, breathing deeply. Then, quite without warning, she flung both arms, half shy, half ardent, about his neck, and laid her face down on his shoulder.

"Oh, Lin Webb," she whispered, "you modest, blind old Lin! As if I ever did . . . or ever could . . . *anybody but you!*"

It was a long time before he could get her to look up. Once having found a refuge from those eager gray eyes she dared not face them again. It was quite enough to hear the things he presently said, in the shaken voice of a strong man who has come into possession of that which he has longed for half his life; quite enough to feel the closeness of the clasp in which he held her. But by and by she found that, gentle as he was with her, he did not mean that she should spend much more of the short time left to him with her warm, winsome face out of sight. Slowly, but irresistibly, his

hand came beneath the cheek which lay against his shoulder and brought the face into view.

"Do you realise, Diantha Brown Webb," said he, softly, "that in all these years of being comrades, I've never touched those lips—not once?"

But, straightway, that was a statement which could never, with truth, be made again.

CHAPTER XXII

TO SPEED THE PARTING GUEST

"WE'LL have to go down to Queenstown with him," declared Roger Barnes to his wife and Robeson at eleven o'clock of the same evening, "if he pulls it off with Diantha, as there's no doubt he's already done—I saw his face, just now, as he said good-night to me in the corridor. It's not in reason that a man should take leave of a girl he's just won and dash off alone to catch his ship, when three chaperons are in the party. What does Diantha care about the North of Ireland, now that Lincoln Webb is bound for the South of it? In truth, what do we, when we can accompany this interesting romance a chapter further?"

His opinion prevailed. Neither Lieutenant Webb nor Miss Brown would have ventured to suggest that their friends should change their plans to such an extent, but when the question was referred to them by Doctor Barnes they gave each other one quick, glad look, which was quite reward enough for the observant and philanthropic gentleman in command of the party. It thus

came about that, when Webb went aboard the lighter which was to carry him across the harbour of Queenstown to the big ship lying out in deep water, his new friends were with him, and Diantha Brown was close by his arm. That arm, it may be said, as the two stood by the rail awaiting the departure of the lighter, was profoundly aware of the contact, though to an ordinary observer it was not a closer one than might naturally be brought about by the pressure of the crowd.

And now a dramatic thing occurred—the sort of thing which usually happens in tales like this one half-hour too late. A cablegram, which Lincoln Webb had been hoping to find at Queenstown, slightly extending his furlough according to a conditional promise made him when he sailed, reached him just before the lighter put off for the ship. It had been forwarded by Mrs. Robeson, in compliance with instructions he had left with her, and it was brought on board by a messenger who looked as if he expected a large fee for catching the American gentleman before he sailed. It may be unnecessary to state that he got it; and when the American gentleman had read the contents in one eager glance of the eye, he got an additional one.

"Come ashore," said the lieutenant to his companions, looking as nearly delirious with joy

as a man can look and yet retain sufficient command of himself with which to face an interested public. "Quick—they're ready to cast off. I don't have to sail—for a week!"

"My dear sir," declared Roger Barnes, when the party stood, laughing and breathless, on the quay, the centre of observation for many eyes on account of the extraordinary haste of their withdrawal from the now departing lighter, "it strikes me that you are in a fair way to become a great general. Your movements are, to say the least, spectacular, and calculated to take the enemy unawares. But let me suggest that you could have gone this performance one better. You could have boarded your ship, received your cablegram, leaped upon the rail, cast yourself into the water, and swum ashore. It would have been vastly more impressive than merely stepping off the lighter with the lady on your arm!"

The answer he got to this speech was only a laughing flash of the eye, and a fervid ejaculation which nobody except the doctor and Diantha caught. But both glance and sentiment must have been satisfactory in expressing the lieutenant's feelings, for Barnes smiled, and Diantha blushed, in a way which meant something appreciative.

Ten hours later the party were back at Bowness-

on-Windermere. The subject under discussion, as they gathered on the terrace after the welcoming dinner, was the method of spending Lieutenant Webb's one week of time. Webb himself and Diantha, it must be explained, had strolled off upon the hillside, ostensibly to watch one of the rare and wonderful sunsets which illumine the Lake District at this season of the year.

"Not that it will make a picayune's difference to them where or how they spend it," averred Robeson. "But to us, as the background to this somewhat picturesque romance, it makes a good deal. I propose that Juliet and I escort them up to Edinburgh, spend a couple of days there, and then run up for three or four more in the Highlands. While in Edinburgh we can pick out our quarters, and the rest of the party can join us there when we've shipped Webb. I shall not suggest that the Barneses accompany us on this ante-honeymoon expedition. Two chaperons are necessary, but more would be superfluous. I'm not going to have those children gazed upon throughout this week of bliss by such an insatiable old romanticist as Roger Barnes."

Barnes expostulated, but Robeson remained firm. When he broached this plan to the two most concerned they agreed to it joyfully. Webb declared that certain of his ancestors on his mother's

side had come from Stirling, and vowed that it would be of great interest to him to look up their tombstones in the burial ground below the castle.

Without loss of time the four were off. None of them will ever forget that journey. It had about it, from first to last, not only a decided flavour of romance, but an atmosphere of that dreamlike happiness which lingers long afterward in the memories of a journey into an unknown and beautiful country made under exceptional conditions of weather and companionship.

It was now September—a month when, if the somewhat dubious climate of one of the most beautiful cities in the world is ever likely to be propitious, the chances lean that way. Although August had been in Scotland a month of almost uninterrupted rain, with the first day of September the clouds began to take flight, and by the fourth, the day of our party's arrival, the state of the weather had become settled into definite and promising fairness. And when it is fair in Edinburgh, the visitor catches his breath for joy in the loveliness revealed.

A Saturday of sight-seeing—the Castle, Holyrood, the Canongate, the Grass-market, Greyfriars—proved a rich day indeed, to eyes not surfeited by preceding similar days. It was followed by the most wonderful Sunday in Diantha's experience.

"Military service at St. Giles, of course?" suggested Robeson. "I'd like to see the Scottish soldier laddies under inspection from a lieutenant of the U. S. A."

"You couldn't keep me away," responded Webb, decidedly.

"I wish you could go in uniform, too," murmured Diantha.

Webb laughed. "It wouldn't look so gorgeous to you as it does at home, though I'll swear it's more military. Up on the Castle parade-ground, yesterday, I found myself wondering how it would affect my standing as a disciplinarian to face my men in tartan trousers, an abbreviated red jacket, and a Scotch bonnet over my right ear. I could do it, I think, if I had to. But if I belonged to a kilted regiment—I could never forget my knees long enough to put my boys through the manual-of-arms. It's a fine sight, though, and they do look the soldier, every inch, bare knees and all."

"This from a man whose forebears were the real Scots!" jeered Robeson.

"It's a long jump from Scotland to the United States. Are we ready? Military service will go off on schedule time, I'm confident."

"Think of going to church together in Edinburgh, on our first Sunday," said Diantha, under her breath, as they came out of the Queen's

Hotel, and proceeded by the way of one wide, quiet, stately street after another toward the old cathedral which is, upon the Sabbath, the Mecca of the traveller in Edinburgh.

Webb looked down at her. "It's great, isn't it?" he answered, with a deep breath of content. "I've been wanting to go somewhere to say a special prayer of thanksgiving, and I think I can do it there, where we're going. It will not be a long one, but it will mean——"

He did not try to tell her what it would mean, but she was quite content. Half-an-hour afterward, when, having watched the long column of scarlet, headed by the pipers, swing down the Lawn-market into Parliament Square and defile slowly into the church, they followed and found their seats well down the nave, the girl felt as if she had indeed entered a sanctuary. The great, quiet, reverent congregation, filling all the available extra space in transept and choir, the Scottish regimental band leading the musical part of the service, the rich voice of the reader of the lesson for the day—it all went deep into her memory. As she stood and knelt and took her seat again, always with the vigorous, erect figure of her lover close beside her, she was feeling intensely that the service was a sort of dedication of her life to his, of his to hers, and of both to the great purpose of

life—the making of it a steady march of progress toward character that should be fit to meet the issues of eternity.

A sweet and solemn peace took possession of the girl's spirit, and the fluttering happiness of the days previous gave way to a sense of rest and quiet joy which nothing could disturb. When the final hymn came, softly breathed forth by the musicians under the spell of a *bâton* which gently beat out the measures, then swelling into triumphant chorus as a thousand voices took up the strains, singing the fine old words as only a Scottish congregation can sing, it fairly bore the young soul away.

"Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us,
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be."

As the music died away under the curving arches, and the congregation sank to its knees for the last silent prayer with which service at St. Giles concludes, a hand closed over Diantha's. Its grasp slowly tightened during those still moments when no sound broke the sacred quiet, and Diantha knew that Lincoln Webb was saying his prayer of thanksgiving. A lump grew in her throat, her own small fingers fiercely gave back

the steady pressure, and her heart, for a little, was like to break. She tried to say a prayer herself, but could not get beyond a passionate, unworded lifting of the spirit toward the great Love which gives into mortal lives such hours as these. And if this be not prayer then are all aspirations heavenward vain.

As she rose unsteadily to her feet, her eyes luminous, her face like that of a just-opened rose, Webb's hand released hers. But looking down at her, there, in the midst of the throng whose presence he had forgotten, he said to her that which she remembered when many other phrases he had spoken had been crowded out of her memory:

"Dear, I feel as if that married us, somehow, heart and soul."

And Diantha did not care if the whole churchful of people saw—knowing they did not, for to other eyes there was nothing to see except a well-built young American turning his back upon the procession of faces coming down the aisles—if only she might never forget the depth of reverent tenderness lying in the softened gray eyes bent upon her.

"Come over into this little chapel behind the rail," whispered Robeson, leading the way, and the others followed. It was worth going for. Often they had seen photographs of the tablet to the memory of a short and noble life of which

Edinburgh is deeply and justly proud, and which no traveller omits to honour. But as they stood before that wonderful tracery upon the bronze of the life-size figure, so strong in its weakness, so powerful in its powerlessness, they found the sight of it to be infinitely more touching than they could have foreshadowed. Somehow tears came to the eyes of more than one of the little party, and only Robeson could have found voice softly to read aloud the resolute and heroic words of Stevenson himself, ending " . . . *that we be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune, and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another.*"

They turned silently away, feeling that the service of the morning had received its crown.

"South Devon in April, Windermere in midsummer, the Scottish Highlands in September. Could anybody have planned it more ideally? Mrs. Robeson, I could almost be content to die now, if—if——"

"If life were not so well worth living," suggested Juliet, understandingly. "I know, dear. And I was confident you would love the Highlands, if you could only see them under these conditions. How fortunate we are!"

"Fortunate! We're blessed beyond common men and women," declared Robeson, coming up in time to catch his wife's last sentence. "This is the finest morning that ever dawned at Mallaig. And ninety-nine chances out of a hundred we should have come up here to find the landscape drowned in mist, the mountains invisible, the land under our feet only a degree less wet than the water out there in the sound, and ourselves reduced to sitting in the inn over a fire, dubbing the Highlands a colossal cheat."

"As it is," said Lincoln Webb, rejoining his friends, after a brief excursion round a turn in the path which led away over the moorlands, in a vain quest for white heather, of which none could be found, though the ground near and far lay richly glowing with the pinkish purple of the commoner variety, "as it is, this is one morning out of a lifetime. I won't say the air beats the air of the Rockies, but I certainly never felt fit for covering more ground than I do this minute. How about it? Shall we go for a tramp? Our boat doesn't sail for the Kyle of Lockalsh till noon, and it's only nine now."

"Oh, yes," voted Mrs. Robeson, seeing the look on Diantha's eager face, "let's have a real tramp over the moors. I can do at least six or eight miles in this atmosphere, and that, though it may

not be much for a Scotchwoman, is a good deal for an American."

So promptly they scrambled down from the rocky eminence behind their hotel to the path below, ascertained from a passing lad that if they held to this route they could not lose their way—though they must take no chances by wandering from it further than it could be kept in sight—and so gaily set out.

"They're a pretty fine pair, aren't they?" commented Robeson, as after a few minutes of companionship Webb and Diantha had frankly quickened their pace and gone swinging on ahead. His eyes were following them with friendly approval. They were, in truth, what the people of this Highland country would have called a bonny lad and lass.

"Very happy—and extremely well mated, it seems to me, which is still more to say," agreed Juliet. "Diantha has developed and improved wonderfully since she came away, and grows more womanly every hour. With all her fun and caprice, she's thoroughly sweet and genuine, and I'm sure her lieutenant may safely trust in her."

"He's tremendously in love, isn't he?"

"He certainly is, though he doesn't sigh like a furnace, as poor Timothy Fitzpatrick did at the last."

"He's hardly the reason. But I admit he has himself well in hand, and hasn't ceased to be good company for an old married man on account of his affair of the heart. I never had better comradeship than I found in him last evening, over the smoke-room fire at the Mallaig inn, after you and Diantha had gone off to bed."

The young people in question, far on ahead, were walking as if they walked on air. No climb of the road was too steep to abate their zeal, no descent too abrupt to prevent their running down it, and over the level stretches they might almost have been wearing the famous seven-league boots.

"I don't know why we're going at such a terrific pace," cried Diantha, suddenly stopping short and looking back over the road.

"I do. We can't help it. It's in our blood."

"What—the Highland air?"

"And the sunshine, and our youth, and health, and—love."

He looked at her, smiling. She laughed back at him, breathing a little quickly with the rapid walk, her face alight and alive with the beauty of that same youth and health. In her trim travelling dress, a bunch of pink heather tucked into her belt, a picturesque hat charmingly tilted above her dark locks, she stood out against the rugged lines of the Scottish landscape like some

vivid flower against a hedge of Norway pine. He studied her closely for a minute—as closely as if every line and curve and hue of her were not already his beyond forgetting.

"What a soldier's wife you'll make!" said he, with enthusiasm.

"Do you think she needs peculiar qualities?" Diantha's cheek was already so richly endued with colour it seemed hardly necessary for her to lay on another stroke, but she did. The air of the Highlands would set the blood coursing in any veins.

"You know she does. Wherever he is stationed, she goes too—unless—well—the boys can't take their wives to the Philippines any more."

"But you're not going there?"

"It looks a bit like it. I can't tell yet, but there's a rumour our regiment relieves the —th in the spring."

Diantha looked sober. Then she smiled at him brilliantly and turned to gaze away toward the distant lines of Ben Edin, showing in tints of blue and purple against a turquoise sky.

"I wish I knew just what that smile means," insinuated Webb, trying to see around the corner.

There was no answer.

"If I must leave anybody behind, I'd rather it would be my wife than my sweetheart. But—

it needn't be either. Hong Kong is not so far away from Manila that an officer couldn't get leave of absence to visit it now and then."

Diantha stopped to pick an especially attractive clump of heather. She than espied another, some distance away, and went after it. An instant later, with a little cry of dismay, she drew back one foot. Webb sprang across the moorland to her. "Into a bog? This is treacherous ground. Better let your humble squire get it for you—if you can really see any difference between this particular bunch and the acres close by the path."

He laid deferential hands upon the foot daintily clad in its low-cut russet shoe, wiped and dried it on his own handkerchief, and then retained it lightly in his grasp an instant while he looked up as he knelt—in imminent danger of soiling his own gray flannels on the moist ground. "In all my life I never put you into saddle without loving the touch of that foot," said he softly.

"And all the while," declared Diantha, presently, when they were back upon the rocky dryness of the path, "I thought you the coolest, most reserved, level-headedest boy that ever raced over the plains. And when I came to know Patsy so well, I was always contrasting his blarneying ways with your fine reticence. *Now*——"

" *'Patsy!'* " said he, with a look at her. "See here, Dina—I think I stood the Irishman pretty well, considering that after I saw him I wanted to shoot him even more fervently than I had all summer—poor chap!"

"Yet you looked at him as if he were a dear younger brother."

Lieutenant Lincoln Webb stood still, threw back his head and laughed—a hearty, whole-souled peal which went echoing blithely away over the moor—the mirth of him who laughs best because he laughs last. But then he brought the conversation abruptly back to the subject which interested him most.

CHAPTER XXIII

NEARLY EVERYBODY GOES HOME

PARADISE is not popularly supposed to be located in the Scottish Highlands. Yet during the four days when the Robesons, Diantha Brown and Lincoln Webb travelled from Edinburgh to Mallaig, from Mallaig by steamer to the Kyle of Lockalsh, and thence by rail again through some of the wildest and finest scenery of Scotland across to Inverness, no fairyland of smiling loveliness could have seemed to them to rival the austerer beauty of the heather-tinted moorlands.

But at Inverness the holiday came to an abrupt and unforeseen end. At their hotel Anthony found awaiting him a cablegram forwarded from Edinburgh according to directions he had given, that he might at no time be out of touch with affairs across the Atlantic. He brought it into the small private sitting-room where the others were considering how they should spend the day at Inverness.

"Here's a facer," said he, so quietly that nobody was startled. "I'm summoned home. The senior Henderson has suddenly dropped

away—I'm needed at once and seriously. That means a Saturday's boat—and anything I can get at this crowded time of year."

This abrupt announcement brought the entire party to their feet.

"It means also," said he, smiling at the sobering faces, and speaking with that cool grasp of the situation which marks the man of business in an emergency, "that we delay not an hour in Inverness. I'm sorry to miss the gathering of the clans we came to see, but the fastest train to Edinburgh will be none too fast for me now."

"Nor for me," said Juliet.

He turned to look at her. "This cuts it pretty short, doesn't it?" he said regretfully. "But Barnes has no summons home. He will be left to take you all on the excursions about Edinburgh we had planned—Our train goes in forty minutes. We'll have a carriage and drive about Inverness a bit on our way to the station. The streets are full of gorgeous soldiery in kilts."

He caught his wife's glance more than once during the hurried drive about the town, but it was not until they were in their compartment in the Edinburgh train that he learned what that half-wistful, half-triumphant expression meant.

"Tony," said Juliet, under cover of the whirr of the speeding wheels, "how many hours can you

give me to pack? I suppose Nurse will have taken out everything the minute she reached Edinburgh, but it won't take long to put them back."

He gave her an intent look. Webb and Diantha were at the opposite window, trying to catch a glimpse of the distant battlefield of Culloden where Prince Charlie's men laid down their lives. He moved closer to her.

"There is much to see and do about Edinburgh," said he.

"Yes, I know."

"And I may have to put up with pretty poor accommodations for the sake of sailing on Saturday."

"Very likely."

"If you and the children and nurse go too, you might have to be crowded out of all comfort."

"Only for seven days."

"Agnes and Diantha——"

"Can stay with the Barneses, of course."

"You'll have hardly time to eat or sleep in order to get ready to catch the boat."

"I don't mind that."

He took her hand into a fervent grasp, and kept it there, since there was nobody to see but the two at the window. "I thought you'd do it," said he, contentedly.

Robeson had wired his change of plans to Barnes, who, with the rest of the party, had that day arrived in Edinburgh. The doctor met him at the train.

"Going home, eh?" said that gentleman.

"As fast as I can get there."

"Leave family behind, I suppose?"

"No, they go too."

"Good. So do we."

"Well, well! What for?"

"Sudden attack of homesickness on learning that a ship was to sail on Saturday carrying one of our party. Rachel said she knew Juliet would go with you. I bet she wouldn't, but I agreed to take Rachel home if Juliet went. Lost, of course. What are you going to do with the girls?"

They all looked at Diantha. Webb, whose face had grown suddenly very bright at the doctor's announcement, gave an odd little ejaculation in his throat and caught the girl's arm in a meaning grasp for an instant, as he walked at her side. They were hurrying through the long Waverley Station toward the flight of steps which leads up to daylight and Princes Street.

"There are several things to do with them," said the doctor confidentially to Mrs. Robeson, but turning his head so that the two pressing close behind could hear. "Leave 'em with the Sunderlands—friends of Agnes we just ran across to-day,

who will be here till November. Or suggest to Lockwood to propose to and marry Nan on the spot and allow that infant Diantha to accompany them on their wedding trip. Or——"

"Or leave the Boston girl here and take the Westerner home," prompted Diantha. "She wouldn't stay behind for——"

"Say 'the wealth of the Indies,'" urged Barnes. "There's no other phrase to express it. Yet—I never would have believed that same Western girl, who has held her little brunette head so high in the air that she wouldn't walk across the floor to meet a man, but invariably forced him to come the whole way—and then sometimes turned her back on him at that—would—actually—follow—a man—across the Atlantic!"

As the doctor swung back into place again after turning to confront the girl from the West with this fling, the laughing eyes of Webb and Diantha met for an instant.

"Not only the Atlantic," said Webb under his breath, dodging to one side and drawing Diantha with him, out of a surging onset of travellers hurrying from the steps into the station, "but the Pacific, too?"

Colouring richly—perhaps with the exertion of mounting the long flight of steps—at which American strangers in Edinburgh stoutly demur,

but characteristically continue to ascend in preference to the slower way by the inclined plane—Diantha nodded. And, as this was the delayed answer to a question asked first three days before, and asked at intervals all the way across the Scottish Highlands, it may be safely asserted that as Webb came out upon Princes Street and piloted his charge across in front of a congestion of tramcars, he could not well have told just then upon what thoroughfare in what city of the world he was setting his feet.

It was a rush. For the women, a flurry of packing; for the men a hurry of telegraphing, of visiting booking-offices, and of buying tickets and arranging for transportation. But it was all done in time, as such business is bound to be when such people take hold of it. Somehow state-rooms can always be secured at the last moment on the most crowded ships, by those who know the way thereof; and Barnes was too old a traveller not to have mastered every expedient by which an indifferent official can be induced to yield up the concessions to which he holds the key. It was not the most crowded quarters to which his party were consigned, neither was anything found lacking in the courtesy shown them. Only the doctor knew—and his friend Robeson guessed—how it had been managed.

Miss Agnes Gilbert sailed with them. It was true that she left Louis Lockwood standing upon the pier, and that the parting had been outwardly a formal one. But as the ship sailed she was holding not only an armful of the finest roses England can produce, but close in her fingers a note whose contents would be likely, she knew before she read them, to fill in any gaps left in the farewell.

"There's not much vibration about this big new ship," observed Mrs. Anthony Robeson to her friends, "but that slight rhythmic underpulse seems to reiterate one phrase very distinctly: —'Going *home*—going *home*—going *home*—going *home*.'"

"To me," said Dr. Roger Barnes, from the depths of a steamer-chair where he lay stretched in the sun, an open novel which he was too indolent to read lying face downward in his lap, "it unremittingly suggests, 'Go to *work*—go to *work*—go to *work!*' There's a monotony about it I don't enjoy. I've tried to get it off upon some other observation, such as 'Take your ease,' or 'Never mind,' but it's no use."

"The wise old boat has a different voice for us all, evidently. Now my particular admonition is prosaic enough, and a natural one in the

circumstances: 'Hurry *up*—hurry *up*—hurry *up!*' and though we're jumping along at the rate of twenty-one knots an hour, we seem to crawl nevertheless. But what I'm interested to know is the particular sentiment this speaking vibration vociferates in the ears of our young people. Webb—" Robeson glanced in that young man's direction.

The lieutenant turned from his place by the rail, where he was watching through a glass a distant passing steamer. He shook his head.

"I'm afraid I'm lacking in imagination," he said. But there was a gleam in his eye which told another story.

"Not proven," drawled the doctor. "Miss Diantha?"

"Why should we all be put in the witness box?" inquired Diantha saucily. She pulled off her little steamer cap as she spoke, and swung it toward the ship in the offing. "I'm sorry for that boat," she observed commiseratingly. "It's headed away from America!—You ask what tune my thoughts run to?—'Oh, *say* can you *see* by the *dawn's* early *light?*'"

"Nine chances to one it'll be by the dawn's early light that you do see it," prophesied Barnes. "According to that one of the ship's officers who deigns to express an opinion, we shall, under the

present conditions of wind and weather, dock about 8 A. M. on the day after to-morrow. Mrs. Juliet Marcy Robeson, will you tell me what there is about that statement to make you look at me as if I had offered you a handful of gold bonds?"

"In her mind's eye," said Juliet's husband, speaking for her, after one glance at the face to whose expression the doctor had called everybody's attention, "she sees, about twenty miles north of that dock, an unpretentious structure painted white, rambling about over a more or less well-kept four-acre lot. It represents to you only a chastened example of the art of a reluctant architect, who remodelled a little old house—upon paper—to show how it should not be done in actuality. To her—and to me—it stands for—something we didn't find in England."

"The only reason for regret at approaching it," said Juliet, smiling at him, "is that we must leave these people all at the same moment. Even Diantha plans to desert us at the pier and go home with the Barneses."

"With the Barneses! Well—if you had said with——"

The lieutenant turned around. Robeson glanced at him with a comical look.

"You can't expect that Lochinvar act of mine to be duplicated under your auspices, Robeson,

more than once in a lifetime," said the doctor, and the lieutenant transferred his glance to him. Then Webb sent a telegraphic message to Diantha. The girl slightly shook her head, then, colouring beautifully, she nodded it.

"We shall be happy," said Lincoln Webb, standing suddenly very straight by the rail, and taking off his cap as he made his announcement, "to have you all meet us at St. John's Church, on the morning of the twenty-ninth, at eleven o'clock. There's nobody in the world, I think, belonging to either of us, to offer any reason why we shouldn't go West together. And since our kind chaperons all belong in the East, and I understand for the present intend to stay there——"

"Look here, Webb," grinned the doctor, "I shouldn't wonder if some of us could arrange to accompany you. I have a patient in Chicago who——"

But Juliet interrupted him. "Roger Barnes," said she, severely, "I believe you put it into their heads. Didn't I hear you elaborately describing your own dramatically hasty wedding to them last evening?"

"You did," admitted the doctor, "and you may have noticed that I dwelt particularly and with much grateful feeling upon the friendly way in which you aided and abetted it."

In the laugh which followed Juliet turned to Webb. "I was expecting to have Diantha with me for the winter," she said. "When did you plan this astonishing arrangement?"

"When your ship sailed last April," answered Lincoln Webb. And looking at his quietly determined face, she had no doubt that he spoke the truth. Yet she liked him for the gentle way in which he added, under his breath and for her ear only—"Yet it would have been small use making plans if the little girl there had chosen to knock them over. I haven't yet got past wondering why she didn't!"

CHAPTER XXIV

NO PLACE LIKE IT

"I'M SORRY to say good-bye," mused Juliet, looking back through the carriage window as long as she could see her friends, whom she was leaving at the pier, the Robesons having somehow been able to make shorter work of the customs than the others. "We've been together so long we seem like one family. I shall miss little Di more than anybody. And yet—somehow, I'm rather glad we are going home quite by ourselves. I believe I'm willing to be nobody's hostess to-night."

"It certainly does seem desirable—just by way of variety. By rights I ought to go straight to the office, but I'm planning to run out to the house with you, have lunch and come back. Mr. Henderson won't expect me before afternoon, and I can't miss enjoying that sense of satisfaction I expect to feel in seeing my family safely under its own roof again."

So they lost no time in getting to the station, and caught an earlier train than they had expected. It was barely noon—a warm and sunny

September noon—when they came in sight of home.

"The dear place," murmured Juliet, gazing happily at it, as the children, shouting with joy, ran on ahead. "How did I ever make up my mind to leave it for so long?"

"It does look a jolly spot, doesn't it? Jollier, by the way, than it did when Roger and I were staying there alone. Jove, how well the lawn and garden show up! Won't it be great to get out and see what's been doing all over the place while we've been gone?"

"Everything will be fun," exulted Juliet. "Hemming dish-cloths, putting closets in order, attending to the storeroom shelves—everything that seemed drudgery when I came away."

"Of course it will. That's the particular beauty of vacation—it puts one in tune for the everyday tasks. Hullo—there's Mary McKaim, beaming at the door. I'll warrant you she has a lunch ready for us that will make the best meal the Hotel Cecil ever put up look like a beggar's wayside makeshift!"

As they went up the walk Robeson turned suddenly to look at his wife. "Do you remember the first time we came up this path together?" he asked, and she nodded, smiling.

"I was just thinking of it," she said.

"It was a path, then, literally, and a weedy one, wasn't it? But it led the way to Paradise! And Paradise it's never ceased to be," he added, under his breath, as he waved his hat, smiling, at good Mary McKaim, hugging the children in the doorway.

But it was not until evening that the full satisfaction of the home-coming filled the cup of the Robesons. They had known how it would be, and had said to each other, when Anthony took up his hat after luncheon—"To-night!"

He was late in coming, and the children had been put to bed. They had spent the afternoon in exploring every nook and corner of their favourite haunts, indoors and out, and exulting over a closetful of old toys, as good as new now in their unfamiliarity. Juliet, undressing Tony and Annette, in the pleasant nursery, had found herself breathing a little prayer of thankfulness that during so long an absence nothing had happened to make her regret that she had ventured to withdraw them from the safe shelter of the home walls. The journey seemed to her, now that it was over, one of doubtful expediency where children were concerned, and she rejoiced to see each bright head laid upon its accustomed pillow, and to feel that the home harbour would see the little ships

ride there at anchor for a long interval before they should again put out to sea.

She went slowly downstairs, after the tired young eyes had closed, feeling that sense of pleasant languor which is apt to steal over one when any period of special responsibility comes to an end, no matter how welcome and congenial the experience has been. Home looked somehow very spacious and restful, after many months in more limited quarters, and the quiet of it, in itself, seemed to her a peculiar and satisfying quality, which she had not before fully recognised.

The click of Anthony's key in the lock sent her flying to meet him.

"Ah, but this is like old times," he rejoiced, looking from his wife to the leaping fire in the living-room fireplace as he pulled off his gloves and flung them aside with his hat. "Children in bed? Good. I'm hungry as a bear. I've lots to tell you, too. Dinner's waiting, I suppose? I'll run up and refresh, then we'll make a beginning of the sort of evening we haven't had for two or three eternities—eh, Julie?"

She watched him spring up the stairs like an eager boy, then turned aside into the dining-room to tell Mary McKaim that the hour had arrived for the dinner of that capable person's life—for such, from certain hints, the newly arrived mistress had learned that it was to be.

And so it proved. It is doubtful, however, heartily as they praised it, and large as was the special recognition of it which afterward found its way to swell Miss McKaim's bank account, whether they appreciated it as thoroughly as if they had not been in quite so radiant a mood. As Anthony observed, "Anything would have tasted ambrosial to-night, wouldn't it?" and Juliet agreed that probably anything would.

When the feast was over they went back to the living-room fire. Anthony lit his pipe, and Juliet drew a low chair to keep his favourite arm-chair company on the hearth-rug.

"'East—west—hame's best,'" said she, with a little sigh of content.

"No doubt of that. I wish everybody thought so. They would—if they had a home and a home-maker like mine."

Juliet smiled into the fire. "You've always given me heaps of credit for my home-making. Yet you don't understand at all that it's yourself that makes home possible."

"Myself!—Well—that's good! How do you make that out? Beyond furnishing a working basis in the matter of cash I fail to see what I contribute—except an immense amount of satisfaction in the finished result."

"That's exactly what you do contribute—and

without that stimulus I should never be able to do my part."

"Your logic is truly feminine. The result of your home-making is my satisfaction—which is the cause of the success of your home-making."

"It may seem to go round in a circle—yet I contend it's logic, just the same. My wedding-ring also goes round in a circle."

"Is that statement supposed to prove your point?" Anthony stretched out his arm and took the hand with the wedding-ring into his. He gently pushed two or three other rings which flashed with jewels away from the small gold band they guarded. "It's not worn out yet, is it?" he observed contentedly, and gave the hand a hearty squeeze before he let it go.

"You truly don't know," began his wife again, after a minute, leaning forward in her chair to sit gazing into the fire with her round chin resting between her hands, her elbows on her knees—a girlish attitude of thoughtfulness which was both characteristic and attractive in a woman who retained all the outward appearance of girlhood —"probably you never will know what it means to your wife to have you love your home so enthusiastically. I don't say much about it, but I want you to know I appreciate it. It makes life easy for me—and dear. I couldn't have expected it.

Most of the married men I've known have cared for their homes—more or less. Some have hated them—judging by the way they've stayed away from them. All of them have been quite willing to spend much of their spare time in other places. But you—you can hardly be driven away from your own chimney-corner!"

"I sound like a pussy-cat—or an old house-dog," laughed Anthony, stretching out his long legs to the blaze, and leaning far back in his chair with his hands thrust into his pockets, his face upturned, his pipe sending up little wreaths of fragrant smoke to the ceiling. "One would think you had difficulty in getting me started for the office in the morning, and that I was sometimes guilty of cutting things short with the firm and flying out here in a fit of homesickness, to throw myself on my bed and sob, 'I c-couldn't stay away any longer!'"

His tone was whimsical, but his face was tender, and as Juliet smiled and shook her head, still staring into the fire, his glance followed her with affectionate understanding.

"You're wrong, I think," he went on, presently, "about one thing. The average man would care for his home above all other places on earth, if he got half a chance. It's in him to do it—it's in the most restless and migratory of his sort.

No matter how he roams about he likes to know he has a home to go to, and his fondness for staying in it is in exact proportion—or so I believe—to the degree in which that home approaches the ideal. Not in outward show—most men care surprisingly little about that—but in the qualities which make it a place happily different from the best club or bachelor's hall which ever existed. You know them—you ought to, for you furnish them. It's the woman in the home who does furnish them, if they're furnished at all, and if she fails—God help the home, that's all—nobody else can!"

"Yet—how can she, Tony, if he's not the right sort? She can try, of course, but if she's not encouraged by his appreciation——"

"Well, it ought to be a partnership, I admit, dear—and so it is in our case, I am happy to believe. . . . And speaking of partnerships—Naturally the death of the senior Henderson brings William R., Junior, to the head of the firm. Edward J. takes second place, and—it's rather a curious fact that, the firm having been made up of three men for so long, it doesn't seem to occur to the brothers that it can possibly continue to exist under the management of the two. They feel that they require a third partner. For some time, as you know, I have practically occupied that

position, as far as responsibility and the direction of affairs have gone. I hadn't expected anything further, even when I knew of the loss of Mr. W. R. Henderson, Senior. But——"

He paused, smiling at the face she turned upon him. "Tony—you don't mean——"

He nodded. She came out of her chair to perch upon the arm of his, at which he sat up and put his arm around her in answer to her delighted embrace.

"Oh, that's simply splendid!" she cried, with her lips against his hair. "There's not a place in the city I'd rather have you fill—not a firm I'd rather have you a partner of. I'm so proud—and pleased—my brave boy who has worked so hard! You deserve it—you deserve it every bit! And they know it. That fine old firm—to make you a partner! They'd never have done it if they hadn't thought quite as well of you as a man as they did of your business ability."

"I hope that's true," he answered thoughtfully, his face bright with pleasure at her praise, for which he cared more than for all the comments of the men upon the street. "Anyhow, it's been the best thing that could have happened to me—these years of association with such men as the Hendersons. No man could work for them or with them without being the better for it in a score of ways."

He discussed the situation with her thoroughly, as it was his custom to do, sure of her interest. An hour passed by during which neither thought of anything but Anthony's future and its possibilities. Then, all at once, Anthony jumped to his feet.

"How warm this fire is!" he cried—"or else I'm warm with the excitement of the talk. It's only late September, after all, and too early to spend a whole evening indoors by the fire. I wonder if it's not just cool and crisp enough outside to make a stroll in the garden refreshing. Come—let's try it—shall we?"

A minute later he and Juliet ran down the porch steps at the back of the house into the garden—a ghostly garden in the September moonlight, with long rows of white fall-anemones bordering the path like sentinels, and clumps of hardy pale chrysanthemums catching the faint light here and there. They fell to pacing up and down briskly, taking the long walk between house and orchard, back and forth, talking fitfully or keeping silence, as it happened, in the companionship which was dependent upon neither speech nor silence for a strong sense of sympathy.

"The twenty-ninth," said Anthony, suddenly, his thoughts coming back to his friends. "That's only five days off. The Lieutenant proves to be of the same impatient disposition as most men,

doesn't he? Well, I remember when delay about getting married after I had once made sure of my girl seemed to me about the most senseless notion in the world. Julie—remember the night we came back to the little house after starting on our wedding journey?"

A quick pressure of his arm and a low laugh answered him.

"I remember thinking, as I stood on the porch and invited you—silently—to come inside, that the happiest hour of my life had struck. I've thought of that many times since, and realised that after all, I was only on the threshold of happinesss then. To-night, do you know—it's odd, but I have that same feeling again. Life never seemed so rich, nor so well worth living. I can't express it, but—well, little girl—the long and short of it is that you seem just a bit dearer to me than you ever did before. I've told you that regularly, about once in so often, I know, but it's been true every time—and it's true to-night. . . . Julie—see that stretch of moonlight reaching clear down past the orchard to the very edge of our property? Let's have a race! I'll give you a handicap to the big oak at the right. . . . Now, —one, two, three—*go!*"

With a burst of light laughter she was off, dropping the loose cloak she had been wearing on the

grass beside her as she flew. As fleet of foot as if she were a girl again, she was running like the wind by the time she had reached the great oak. Anthony gave her ten feet farther, then he dashed after her.

He was much heavier, in proportion to his years, than she, and had counted more confidently on his old powers than he would have done if he had not expected her to lose her breath much sooner than she did. As it was, it took his best effort not to let her outstrip him and come to the rustic seat by the wall at the end of the path before him. But just before she reached the goal she felt his arms seize her, found herself caught up into his powerful grasp in the old way he had always used with her, and, laughing and gasping for breath, received, with his kiss, the fervent and characteristic tribute —"I may let you get away from me for a bit, my sweetheart—but never for longer than it takes to come after you and bring you back. . . . *For I can't live this old life without you, and you know it—don't you!*"